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# **F**our Key-Words \* \* of Religion



W. R. Huntington

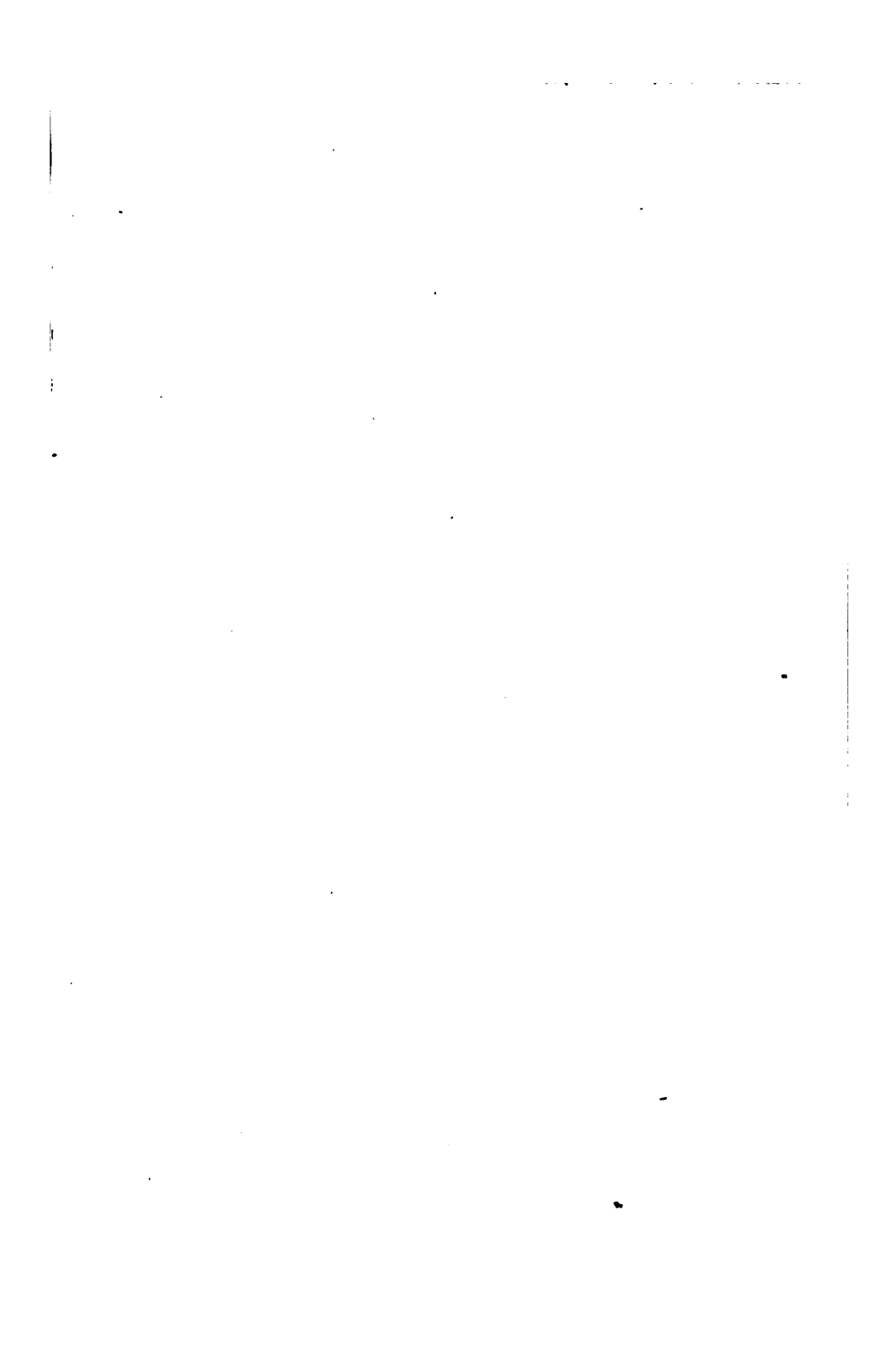
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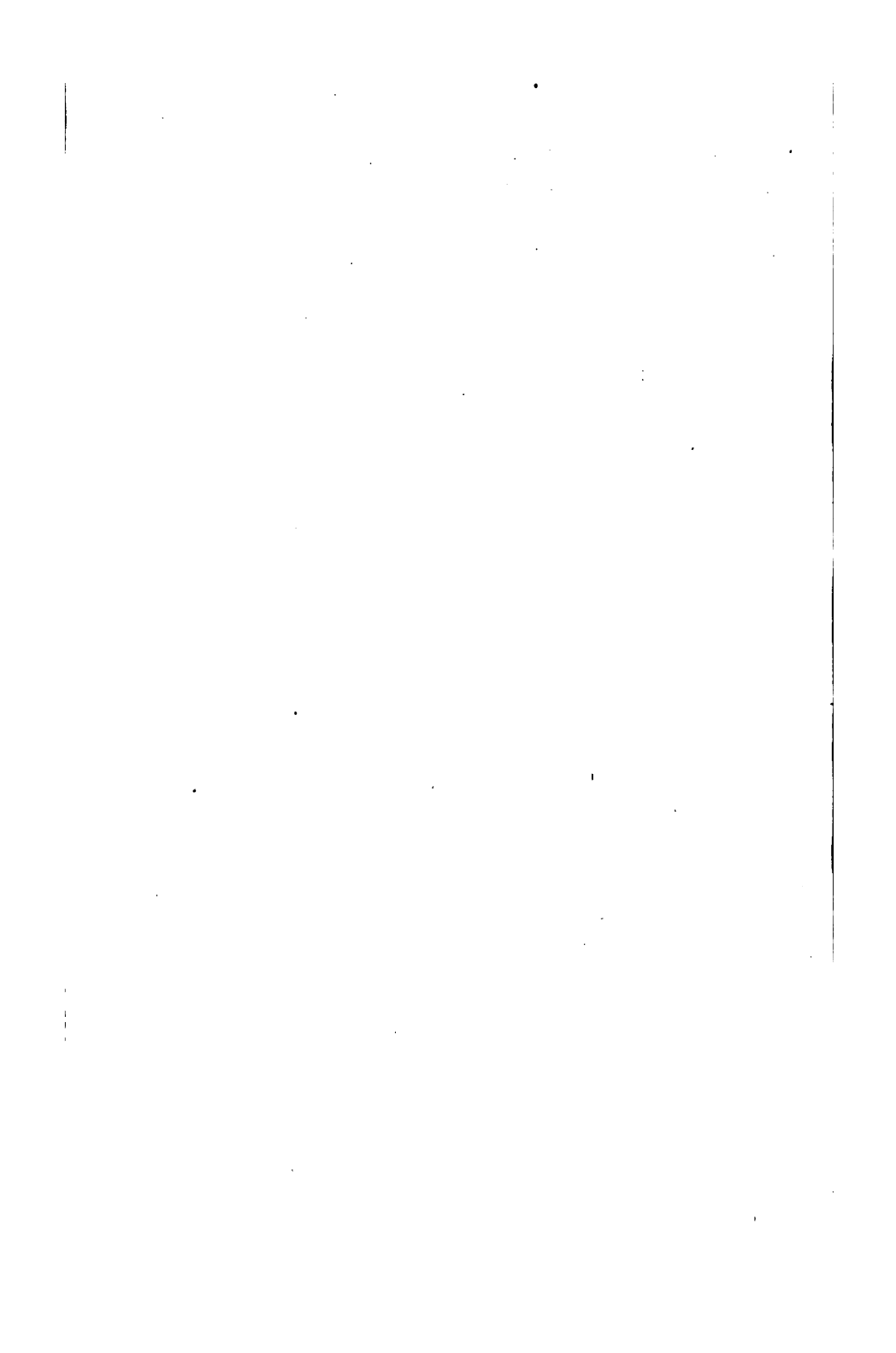
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## **FOUR KEY-WORDS OF RELIGION**

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THOMAS WHITTAKER

PUBLISHER

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# FOUR KEY-WORDS OF RELIGION

AN ESSAY IN UNSYSTEMATIC DIVINITY

BY  
WILLIAM REED HUNTINGTON, D.D.  
RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH, NEW YORK

SECOND EDITION

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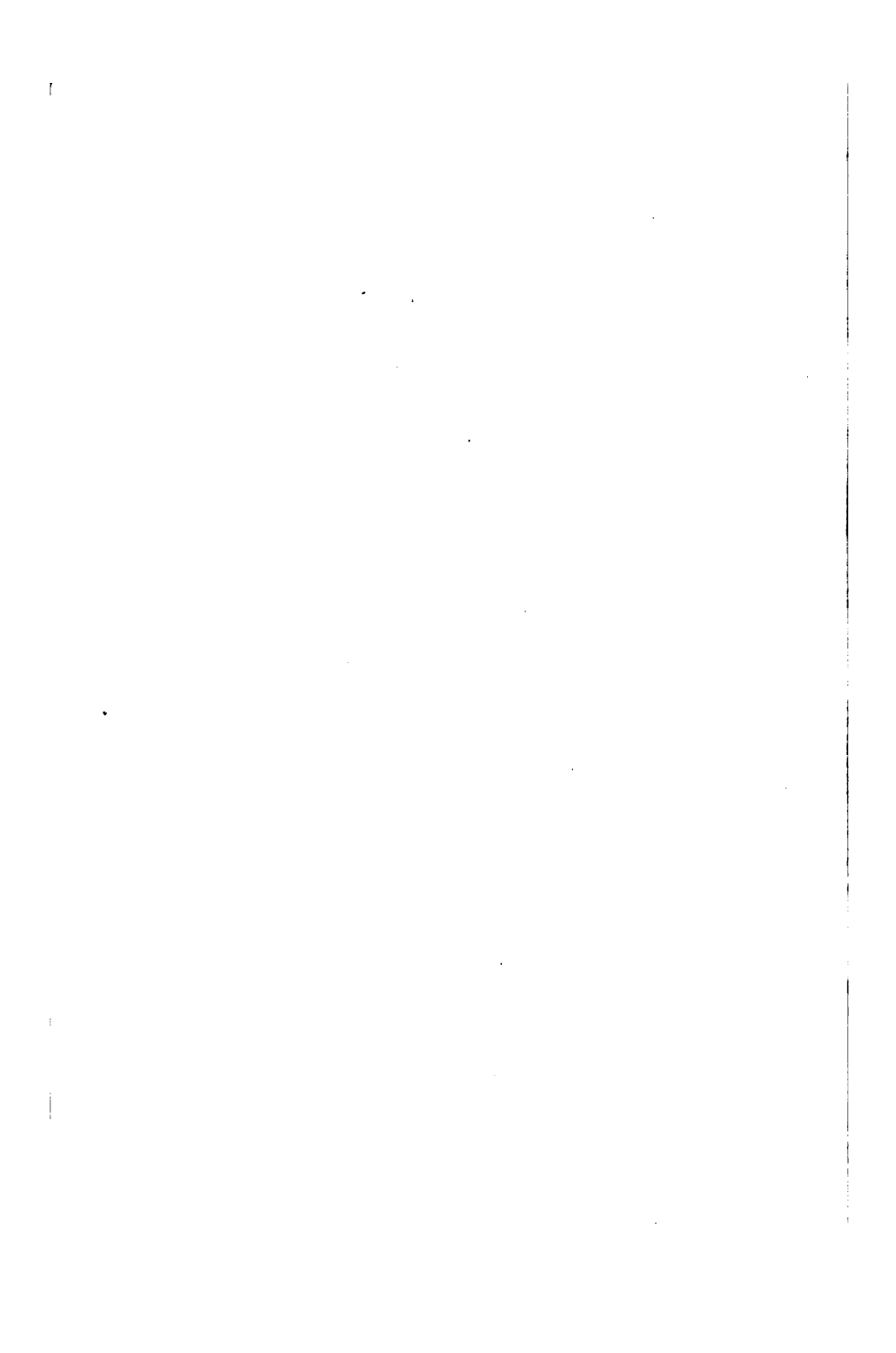
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I.  
**LIFE.**



## I.

### LIFE.

BACK of everything lies LIFE. "As I live," is God's oath. If then one would discourse coherently about religion, let him begin with Life. Nor must he be discouraged by the fact that the word cannot be defined. The very best things, all of them, elude definition; it is only the second-best that submit to the indignity of letting themselves be explained. We know what life is because we ourselves are living souls, but as for putting this knowledge into words, saying life is this, or life is that, let us leave the attempt to the system-makers who give a synonyme and name it a definition. The most pretentious of all the attempts at defining life made in our day<sup>1</sup> is with difficulty kept out of the jest-books, so droll is it in its circumlocution. There is another thing that ought not to discourage us, and that is our knowing life to have been a late comer on this planet. The fact that evidences of vegetable and animal vitality appear only in the more recent strata of the earth's crust does not really militate against my opening declaration that back of everything lies life, for we have learned

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Herbert Spencer's.

to reckon time no longer *Anno Mundi* but *Anno Domini*, and by so much as God antedates the world, by just so much also is life itself anterior to the genesis and manifestation of it here.

Of course, in saying this, I am begging the question of the materialists; I am taking for granted a point which they would prefer to keep always under debate. But what of that? I have undertaken to speak to you of four monosyllables, four great key-words of religion, Life, Light, Law and Love, but I cannot pretend to do them justice unless, before linking them together, I begin by attaching each and every one of them to a monosyllable of even deeper import still. I cannot give them even so much as the tinge of sanctity, let alone any deeper dye, until they shall have been baptized into the holy Name. In a word, it will be impossible for you and me to confer together satisfactorily about religion without having first postulated God. Theism presupposed, we shall find our whole subject luminous from centre to circumference; with theism waiting to be demonstrated, we might as well not begin; for the work on the approaches would keep us from ever getting at the temple. But let me say a few words, before going any farther, about the advantages that ought to accrue from our having chosen to approach religion upon what I may call realistic as distinguished from rational and speculative lines. Much of the prevailing

bewilderment with respect to things spiritual may be traced to a consciousness of ill-success in thinking out, or trying to think out, some perfectly self-consistent scheme of belief, some complete theory of the relations which each soul sustains to God, and all souls to one another. Doubtless the final theology and the final sociology, when they come, will give us just this; but meantime, while we are waiting for the final theology, and the final sociology, there are certain pressing needs which simple folk would like to have met and satisfied. To this end I venture to think that substantives are of more value than either adjectives or verbs. What we want in religion to-day is object teaching. Things must be seen for what they really are, before we can map and classify the relations in which they stand to one another. In the spiritual quite as strictly as in the temporal order, the law holds that our perceptive powers must be sharpened before our reflective faculties can accomplish much. Vision comes before logic. It is by actual contact with the raw material of their sciences, by personal acquaintance with the crystal and the cell, that the great chemists and biologists purchase to themselves a good degree. So with the soul, it is laboratory work she wants; actual observation of real and spiritual entities, contact with what a New Testament writer, anticipating the vocabulary of modern philosophy, calls the heavenly



"things themselves." The metaphysics of salvation can wait; it is for the facts of salvation that the demand presses. Here are these familiar words that I have named,—life, light, law, love. They enjoy a universal recognition; there is nothing provincial about them as standards of value; they belong to the coinage of the realm, are secular, if you like that word, yet are they "shekels of the sanctuary" as well, the symbols and tokens of an eternal preciousness. It will do us good to study them together, to pass them from hand to hand, to scrutinize the image upon each, and to spell out what we can of the superscription. If meditation upon these *principia* shall serve the purpose of making religion as a whole seem to you and me less of an abstraction and more of a reality, there is not one of us who will begrudge the little time exacted by the attempt.

I do not know that I can better justify the particular order in which I have named, and in which I purpose treating our four key-words of religion than by calling your attention to certain noteworthy structural features of the book we name the Bible. The critics have kept us so busy of late with the details of Holy Scripture, that even with the best intentions in the world we are in great danger of losing sight of that very important matter, the general effect. We never do a building justice so long as we confine

ourselves to studying the architecture bit by bit. Really to appreciate Durham or Notre Dame, one must get out from under its shadow, stand somewhere over against it, view the whole thing in perspective. Now, the Bible is a building, it has unity and proportion of parts, a portal, a nave, side-aisles, and a sanctuary or holy of holies. Take whatever view of the origin and compilation of the Scriptures you choose, there is no getting away from the fact that the result, as we see it, has this symmetrical character. The architecture may strike us as very irregular, it may seem to partake more of the Gothic than of the classic idea, nevertheless it is architecture, what we see is a building, not a mere heap of stones. To this same building I would give, were I choosing a name for it, the title which Rossetti gave to his "Sonnet-Sequence,"—*House of Life*. Let me say why.

How does the Bible begin? It begins with an account of the process by which the earth was made ready to receive and gradually to warm into activity certain germs of life. "A very childish account," you say. Well, I am not so sure of that. The round world itself was a child once. All epic language is childish, if by childish, you mean simple, easily understood. The grand style is monosyllabic, or as nigh to that as may be. People would cease to fret themselves as they do over the first chapter of Genesis, if

instead of trying to make it out a manual of paleontology, and well up to date at that, they would be content to let it sing itself out as a majestic psalm of life.

"But," you complain, "even so, it is so short as to lack dignity, such curtness is unbecoming. In the light of what we know of the age of the globe especially as compared with the brevity of man's residence upon it, how foolish to have attempted to cram the evolution of the stellar, or even of the solar system into a score of verses, more or less!" Yes, foolish enough I grant, if the purpose had been to provide modern man with a complete natural history of the universe, but not so foolish if the intention was simply to indicate in a few bold strokes, charcoal-sketch fashion, how a stage had been provided for a drama. The contract for the masonry of The theatre of Athens has not survived; but the Agamemnon endures. Possibly the preliminary document may be unearthed, some day or other; but, even if found, it would scarcely compete in interest with the play.

Do not imagine that in saying this I am seeking to cheapen the glories of physical as contrasted with psychical research. On the contrary, we may well hold that every doctor of science is implicitly doctor of divinity, and that each new volume of duly authenticated discovery is only one more commentary upon the text of

the first paragraph of the Apostles' creed, "I believe in God, The Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." But when it comes to a question of comparative values, I maintain, as every theist is bound to do, that not only the builder of the house but also he for whom the house has been builded is greater than the house. The author of Genesis was right; therefore, in not encumbering his record with too many particulars of the process whereby the worlds were framed. His concern was to make ready a soil into which the tree of life could strike its roots. It belonged not to his care to tell the whole story of the disintegrating rock and the alluvial deposit; to have done justice to that side of the subject would have necessitated an even larger Bible than we have, and perhaps the most plausible of all the objections to the Bible as it stands is the voluminousness of it. Only think how the critics would be laughing at us to-day if those many treatises which Solomon composed upon the *flora* and *fauna* of Palestine had been included in the Old Testament canon! And yet even the *flora* and *fauna* would have seemed less out of place in Holy Scripture contemplated as a "house of life" than full particulars of those long azoic ages through which the slowly cooling earth was making ready to become a dwelling-place.

"He formed it," says an old prophet speaking

of the earth and condensing as he did so all teleology into a sentence,—“He formed it to be inhabited.” That being so, and seen to be so, there was no call upon the writers who had undertaken the interpretation of the mind of God to dwell very long upon the preliminaries of their task. They would not contemptuously blink or wave aside the question of origins, but neither, on the other hand, would they let the study of origins so absorb their thought as to make them indifferent to finals. Fountains are interesting but so are streams, and so is the great sea also into which the stream empties when it has run its course. Let us cease therefore to wonder any longer that the Bible should begin where Geology leaves off, or to speak more accurately should give us its Geology in a nut-shell. Nothing else ought ever to have been expected, for the subject-matter of the Bible is life, and why seek ye the living among the dead?

I say the subject-matter of the Bible is life; but there are many kinds of life, with which of them does the Bible deal? With all of them, I answer, but more especially with the life of man and with that life as it stands related on the one hand to the life beneath and on the other to the life above itself, to the life purely animal and to the life wholly divine.

I know of nothing more august or more beautiful in the whole range of letters than the reap-

pearance in the closing chapters of the Bible of that "tree of life" so soon lost sight of at the start. I speak not now particularly of the theological import of the two pictures, but looked at simply in a literary light, how full of an indescribable pathos the contrast is,—at the beginning the man and the woman, the first father and the first mother, and in the midst of the garden the tree of immortality; then when we come to the end of the book, again the tree of immortality, but now as the centre of a city, the resort of nations, the food of a whole race. The planting and the transplanting, the appearance, the disappearance and the reappearance, how marvellous all of them! If the Bible be what it purports to be, the story of man's slow attainment through fire and flood to a firm foothold in the perfect social state, surely the noise it has made and is making in the world is abundantly justified. No other sacred book, whether of East or West, has attempted to dramatize the world's biography after this fashion.

Notice carefully the ordering of the whole thing. First of all, God, the builder, provides a foundation for his House of Life by laying broad and firm a basis of solid rock. Into the deeper parts He pours his oceans, the rest He dots with lakes and streaks with rivers. Standing-ground having been thus provided for the coming tenant, the next question is that of food-supply. The

judicious Hooker somewhere observes, with a touch of that sanctified humor which is one of his characteristics, that in order to live godly a man must first of all live. Assuming it to have been the divine purpose ultimately to establish godliness on the earth, we cannot fail to see the antecedent necessity of giving man not only a solid floor on which to tread, but also some staff of life. Since motion involves energy, the moving creature man will demand food. To the process by which the inorganic world was slowly clothed upon by the organic, the Bible writers give as little space and as few words as they gave to the land-making and water-distributing preliminaries; but having once brought man upon the scene they are full of eagerness to see what he will do. He has been provided with a floor, he has been set upon his legs, he has been given his meat and drink, in other words, he has been made

"Lord of the senses five;"

and now what next? Why, next, this, he must be taught that, necessary as bread is to survival, he cannot live the full, the perfect life which it is in him to live by bread only. Animal life is good, for certain of God's creatures it is the highest good, but for man there are two grades above it, a superior and a supreme, namely, the life ethical and the life spiritual, how shall he be inducted into these? Only one answer is possi-

ble. He must be inducted into these by the guidance of the right hand of the Almighty. As it was by a divine inbreathing that he became human, so must it be by a still fuller and deeper inspiration from the same source that he becomes next the righteous man of the Proverbs and the Psalms, and last of all the saintly man of the Beatitudes and the Apocalypse.

You say, this has a plausible sound and is all very well, but it seems to suggest a desire to force Christianity into line with a popular and prevailing philosophy, it savors suspiciously of evolution. But what of that? Can any doctrine of progress or of growth (and surely Christianity is a religion of progress and of growth), be even so much as imagined unless evolution be in it? If it is well to be on our guard against "Old foes with new faces," so is it also well not to let new faces prejudice us against old friends. Evolution is nothing in the world but a new face upon that very, very old friend of ours whom we used to know as "growth." When our Lord Jesus Christ set forth his formula,—“First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear,” He gave his *imprimatur* not necessarily to Lamarck's, or to Darwin's, or even to John Henry Newman's,—but to some doctrine of evolution, both as respects the maturing of character in the individual soul and the upbuilding of the divine kingdom of the world at large.



Should it be asked why, if evolution be such a simple and harmless thing as this, there should ever have been so much fuss made over it, the answer is, that the novelty has lain in tracing the operation of the laws of growth in things which formerly were not conceived of as organic. The evolution of a single tree is an old story and accordingly for that an old word sufficed, what has startled men and driven them into inventing a new word has been the suggestion that such things as literatures and ethical systems and religions may have had their acorn, sprout and sapling days. Yet even here Christ, with his parable of the Vine and the Branches anticipates by well-nigh two thousand years our latter-day philosophers, for in thus likening the new organism which his blood was destined to infiltrate and vitalize to a growing plant, He set the pattern to which the men who to-day are painfully rewriting all the histories consciously or unconsciously conform. The only philosophy of evolution which Christianity is bound to fight is that which invites us to contemplate the Universe as a seed-plot, and then forbids us to believe that any Sower ever went forth to sow. This *non sequitur*, Christianity does indeed reject and with emphasis.

But what about "the fall of man," you ask, and our innate sense of belonging to a guilty race? Why this,—that if, as there seems to be

every reason for our doing, we understand "the first Adam" of St. Paul's famous parallel to mean generic or natural man, the sense of sin in us (and God forbid that I should attempt to minimize it) may just as easily be associated with the verb "to fail" as with that other which differs from it by only a single letter, the verb "to fall." The foremost New Testament word for sin, as Greek scholars have no need to be reminded, has "failure" for its primary signification. That Adam, the "natural man," as such, fails, and without help from a higher source must for ever fail to evolve himself into that perfect man which nevertheless the very fact of his having somehow tasted of the knowledge of good and evil tells him that he ought to be, is a conclusion forced upon us alike by history, by observation, and by experience. So then, the race needs a Saviour, and you and I need one, quite as really on the supposition of Adam's having failed in his effort to climb up to his felicity, as on the hypothesis of his having fallen out of his felicity. "The fall of man" is not a phrase which anywhere occurs in Holy Scripture, or in the primitive creeds of the Church. Why then should the prospect of our possibly having to modify or even to relinquish it make us tremble for the ark of God? Certainly it would seem to have been rather a sense of failure than a recollection of fall that drew from the lips of the very man who

wrote the Epistle to the Romans and who for that reason is the most closely associated in the popular mind with the doctrine of race-guilt, the impetuous cry,—“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, I press toward the mark for the prize.”

Then again, even conceding historical reality to a “fall of man,” even supposing what the great Oratorian calls<sup>1</sup> “a terrible aboriginal calamity” to have happened in the far and unrecorded past, how know we that it may not have occurred elsewhere than on this planet? Such a supposition is no more violent than the similar one widely entertained and never reckoned unorthodox, namely, that a homestead other than this present earth awaits the human family in the future. It seems to be considered certain that the globe is destined, sooner or later, to become a spent ball. In that case, man will have to live somewhere else. Why, then, may he not have lived somewhere else before he came here? Why may not what Wordsworth says of the individual hold true of the race?

“The soul that riseth with us, our life’s star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar.”

On such a supposition, a supposition fathered by Plato among the philosophers, and by Origen and Müller, among the theologians, man’s having

<sup>1</sup> Newman’s *Apologia pro Vita sua*, p. 268, Am. Ed.

had to begin here at the bottom of the ladder would simply mean that, in children's parlance, he had been sent to the foot of the class, and must climb his way up to where he was before. This would relieve the evolutionists of their difficult task of accounting for the origin of the moral sense, for we should have then confronting us not the genesis but the reawakening of conscience. As letters and words slowly return to the mind of the convalescent after some forms of fever, so, for aught we can know certainly to the contrary, may conscience, temporarily eclipsed, have gradually come out of shadow.

But as I have said, we are more concerned in this enquiry with substantives than with verbs, more interested in unquestionable facts than in the subject-matter of doubtful disputations; so that passing from our brief glance at what it may have meant for man to fall or fail, I shall ask you to dwell with me a little longer, before we wholly drop this matter, upon the thought of life regarded as a thing of levels and degrees. Observe then that there is such a thing as a religion of the animal life. It consists in the proper care and use of the bodily faculties. Strangely enough the brutes, prompted by what we blindly call their instinct, live up to this religion better than we do. To its rubrics and prescriptions they yield unquestioning obedience. Sir Samuel Baker, a naturalist of large experi-

ence, declares that there is only one wild beast known to him that through depraved appetite can be tempted to taste unwholesome food. It is the exception which proves the rule. The brutes in the main are religious up to their lights. They keep their law. Not so with man; —made trustee of the body, put in charge of the most intricate and delicate piece of mechanism ever constructed, he falls away, almost as soon as he is born, from that original righteousness the evidence of which is health, and straightway, as Lord Bacon puts it, "begins to die." Cleanliness and temperance are what make the religion of the animal life; temperance being understood in its large sense of self-control exercised in the realm of the appetites and passions. Those you observe are purely individual excellences. The religion of the animal life would be possible if there were only one subject of it in existence. Not so with the religion social or ethical; for that to be realized two or three must be gathered together. Given a group of living souls, and at once there springs into being a whole network of duties, rights, responsibilities, privileges to which isolated man is a stranger. These rights, duties and so forth have to be classified, adjusted, provided with some sort of sanction; and when this has been done we discover that there has been superimposed upon the religion of the animal life, the religion of the social life.

The Old Testament gives us the story of the process by which a single elect race was schooled in this form of religion; but because this solitary prominence attaches to the Hebrew morality, it does not follow that the other moralities were of no account. God did not leave Himself wholly without witness among Hindoos, Greeks, and other races unknown to us even by name, when He discriminated in this matter of ethical culture in favor of the stock of Abraham. In the midst of the many moralities it was requisite that there be set up a standard morality by which the others could be judged. To the Greek it was given to establish the norm in Art, to the Hebrew the norm in conduct; the one race discerned more clearly than the rest the line of beauty, the other the path of righteousness.

Politics no part of religion? Of course religion covers politics. It covers politics just as really as it covers family life, for the nations are but larger families. What means the preservation to us in sacred books of the long story of the Hebrew monarchy with its vicissitudes of conquest and captivity unless this, that the right ordering of the social life of man here on the surface of this earth is an integral part of religion.

But the religion of the social life is not all, if it were there would have been no need of a "New" Testament. The Prophets, the Proverbs,

and the Psalms contained all, or at any rate the germs of all that it was necessary for men to know in order to be enabled to work out their ethical and political problems. But it was God's purpose to lead us up to a higher level still. Did you ever notice how strikingly contrasted the two great divisions of the Bible are in this very point, of the interest manifested in national life as such? It was not because of any prevailing torpor with respect to political questions that Christ and His Apostles observed so marked a reticence. The air in their day was full of talk and noisy talk about Cæsar and about Herod, there were labor controversies and a home-rule question, agitators were going up and down the land inflaming the passions of men and fanning party spirit to a white heat, and yet we hear from Christ and his Apostles nothing that at all resembles the political utterances of the old prophets, the burdens of righteous indignation which were heavier than they could carry, and which they unloaded on Moab and Damascus, Egypt, Nineveh and Tyre.

Was this because, with the coming of Christ politics had ceased to be a part of religion? By no means but rather because the time had come for lifting religion one grade higher than even the ethical level, for making it an affair not of the animal life only or even of the social life only, but of the spiritual and heavenly as well. Hence-

forth, men were to be taught not to be less careful of the true interests of the body, or less careful of the welfare of the family and the state, but more careful than ever before for the things of the Spirit, more amenable to the powers of a certain "world to come" which hitherto had kept itself in the background.

Up to Christ's time, the life of the invisible world had possessed for man no charm of attractiveness. Even to the best and bravest of them death had meant a sort of going out into the cold, the exploration of a land of shadows. They thought of another life when they thought of one at all, as a spectral and gruesome thing, the entrance upon which would mark a distinct letting down from the happier level of this well-to-do and sunshiny earth. "Thou shalt bring me into the dust of death," writes David sadly; "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest," adds Solomon his son. Contrast with these mournful voices the glad announcement of Jesus Christ,— "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more and more abundantly." He does not deny that in a certain measure, and after a certain sort, they have life already; what He wishes them to understand is that He has brought in more of it, and that his is the better kind.

It is impossible to do justice to the New Testa-



ment religion until we have recognized this life-revealing and life-bestowing side of it. Some people can see in the Gospel nothing whatever beyond a provision for the forgiveness of sins. Thank God the Gospel is that; but thank God also the Gospel is more than that. For why is it that we desire the forgiveness of our sins unless that by being loosed from the clog and burden of them we may be at liberty to live the sort of life we know to be the best. Other people there are who can see in the Gospel nothing whatever beyond an admirable code of morals, a divine lesson in the art of conduct. Thank God the Gospel is that; but thank God the Gospel is more than that. For if there be such a thing awaiting us as a heavenly city, we need to be initiated into the manners and taught the speech which there obtain, quite as much as we require drilling in the more elementary morals of this life present. The life of the Ten Commandments is high, but the life of the Beatitudes is higher. Confucius and Mohammed were both of them quite equal to the task of providing for their followers systems of ethical culture, the thing distinctive of Jesus Christ is His declaration "I give eternal life."

To discover an indestructible kind of life, and then to devote one's self to living it,—What higher ideal can a man set before himself than this? And it is to this, just this that Christ in-

vites us. In the biography of that erratic man of genius, Laurence Oliphant, there is one continually recurring phrase which by its ring of genuineness makes up for much in the man's utterances which we feel constrained to reckon whimsical and even absurd. Oliphant was never weary of reiterating his desire and his determination to "live the life." And is not that what all of us are after,—all of us who are in earnest, "the life," not any life that may happen, not a life given over to games and toys or a life taken up with accomplishments, but "the life," the life which no conceivable blow of fate or shock of chance can spoil or shorten or annul.

The Christian church professes to have in its keeping "the words of this life." You remember the origin of that expression. The apostles had been shut up in the city prison, apparently on the charge of being disturbers of the peace; "But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them forth and said, 'Go stand and speak in the temple, to the people, all the words of this life.'" Hasty readers take the angel to have meant "this life" as contrasted with the next, but you and I, after these thoughts which we have been thinking together, ought to know better than that. By "this life" he meant this heavenly life of which the risen Christ is the fountain, and by "the words of this life" he meant such words as help men in finding their

way to the fountain's brink. Concerning a little group of these same words I have undertaken with much self-distrust and many misgivings, to speak to you. It may not be that "light" and "law" and "love" are all the words of "this life," but I am sure no Christian believer will deny that they are some of them. I know that the thought of being spiritually helped by any words whatsoever is alien to some minds. In fact one of the reasons why it has become so fashionable of late to sneer at creeds, is because creeds are made up of words, and religion we are bidden to remember is a thing not of words but of actions, not a theological proposition but a life. True, religion is not a theological proposition, but it is a thing which without theological propositions cannot be. "There is a God" is a theological proposition, yet it is difficult to see how man can "live the life" without at least that much of creed. "Send men to Joppa," said the voice, "and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." Evidently words counted for something with that angel; he believed that they could be made to minister to life.

Think not scorn then of these that I have called monosyllabic key-words of religion. They are few in number and brief in compass, but there is in them that which goes to build the bone and

nourish the fibre of the spiritual man. The saints have fed on them and been the stronger. They were often on the lips of Paul, John employed them, Augustine, Bernard, à-Kempis—all the great masters knew them well, nay, let me name the greatest, they had his sanction who was heard to say, "The words that I speak unto you are Life."



**II.**  
**LIGHT.**



## II.

### LIGHT.

IN order to determine the true place of LIGHT in the symbolism of religion we must first of all consider the uses and benefits of light in common life. We cannot hope to do justice to the light

“that never was on sea or land”

until we have at least endeavored to appreciate that more familiar ray by dint of which both sea and land are known to us. Here, as elsewhere, “that is not first which is spiritual but that which is natural,” so that if we would understand “true light” and “heavenly vision,” we must be content to begin with daylight and the human eye.

But as before in the case of life, so now in the case of light I shrink from definition. Nobody knows what light in its essence really is. It was easy once to call it with the eighteenth-century physicists an emanation, it is easier now to call it with the nineteenth-century physicists an undulation, it will be still easier, perhaps, by and by, to call it something else; but although we have made out to analyze and even to time light, we are almost as far as ever from being able to say in words just what it is.



No scientific man of standing accounts the so-called "luminiferous ether" to be anything more than a good working hypothesis, and one might as well declare that he knows the great deep because he has watched the play and stroke of its waves, as say that he knows light because of his having studied it with lenses and prisms.

This much, however, it is well within our power to do, judge light we can by its effects; up to a certain point we can declare with entire confidence what ends light serves. Let us go at this. Speaking roughly, we may say that there are four elements involved in what we understand by sight, namely, the man who sees; the bodily mechanism,—brain, nerve, retina, etc., by which he sees; the visible object actually seen; and light. Two of these four are constants, two are variables. The man and external nature [*pace* Bishop Berkeley] are the constants, but if you either hurt the eye or quench the light, though man and object still remain, you have effectually cut off all communication between the two, there is no longer any vision. So then, after all, in rather a roundabout way, we have found something that approximates to a definition; light, it appears, is a means of seeing, it is that without which the very best constructed eye is useless. It is a certain something which, entering at one of the gateways of the brain, makes the mind cognizant of things outside of itself.

Of some things outside of itself the mind can indeed be made aware in other ways. Sight is not the only sense. But there are certain things of which the race, if it were a blind race, would of necessity remain permanently ignorant. We should not, for instance, so much as guess at the existence of the stars, nor could we apprehend the contour of mountains or the reach of ocean without sight: since touch avails us only for what is near, and hearing only for what is vocal. The teachers of the blind have accomplished marvels, almost miracles, but were they blind also what could they do? If man would see, he must have the eye with which and the light by which to do it. Now then let us enquire how it is in religion with this matter of sight and light.

Which, to begin with, are the two constants in this case? They are these, are they not? At our end of the line the soul, at the other end God and the things of God. Religion means the bringing into right relations of these two. By the soul I should like to be understood as including all there is of man that is not distinctly and demonstratively material. Whatever there is in us that can perceive, think, feel, reason, hate, fear, love, believe or doubt, set that down to the account of soul.<sup>1</sup> Possibly this large definition of the soul may shock the sensibilities of some; but I am quite sure that it would not have

<sup>1</sup> See this thought expanded in the author's *Psyche*, pp. 11-13.

shocked David or Isaiah or St. Paul. What would really have startled these Bible worthies would have been to be assured that by the soul they ought to understand only so much of themselves as they knew to be susceptible of purely spiritual emotions. Their own way of talking about the soul was the most natural thing in the world. To their thinking the man was the soul.

To listen to many modern religious teachers, one might suppose that the soul was a department of man's inner life in much the same way that the judiciary is a department of the government or astronomy a department of science. They even give us the impression, sometimes, that the godless and irreligious have no souls, or at any rate are totally unconscious of possessing them. But Abraham, you remember, classifies his household under the two heads of souls and goods, by which he evidently means people and merchandise. In the Psalms, souls are hungry and thirsty, weary and faint. In the Proverbs the soul of the sluggard is quite as self-conscious, quite as real a thing as the soul of the diligent. And in the Gospels it is not a particularly religious or spiritually-minded man who is represented as saying to himself,—that is, to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many days; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry."

Evidently, to our Lord's thinking, the soul of

man is as capable of merriment as of devotion, as truly open to sensual as to heavenly delights. In other words the narrow definition which would limit the soul to the exercises of holiness and account her incapable of any tempers and dispositions save devotional ones is not the true definition. Rightly understood the soul is the man, the man minus, I will not say the body, lest I be misunderstood, but the man considered apart from the few scores of pounds of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen which he happens, at any given time, to be chemically and mechanically using.

Do you urge that in thus defining the soul, I am identifying the recipient of spiritual vision with the recipient of common, ordinary earthly vision? That is precisely the very thing I am trying to do. I want to persuade you, for I think it one of the most important things for people to become persuaded of in these days, that a man in religion is intrinsically the same man that he is in common life, with this difference only, that in religion his eye takes in a wider sweep of the realities of the universe and his affections a grasp upon things that cannot fail. With a telescope upon a pivot you may turn your object-glass towards Orion, or towards a light-house on an island off the coast, or at your neighbor's study lamp shining through his window. You are not a different man because you see fit

to put your instrument of vision to these diversified uses. You are different, indeed, to this extent, that, in each case, you find yourself occupied with a different set of thoughts, feelings and associations, but you are, and you are conscious of being, one and the same living soul, no matter in which direction you see fit to swing the glass. It was not as spirit that you explored the heavens, as intellect that you considered the coast-light, as heart that you looked fondly on your friend at his work, it was as man, as a living soul,—for that is what as we are told man became at his creation, it was as a living soul that you did all three things.

Thus far therefore, we have proceeded in our problem: we are agreed that in religion the recipient subject is the soul. But I wonder whether we all of us realize what a great point is conceded when that word "recipient" is allowed to pass unchallenged. There are many people who think it rather a pusillanimous or at any rate a lamentably one-sided conception of the religious life to make it consist wholly of receiving. Endowed with what we call an active temperament, strong in will, fond of enterprise, eager for effort, such persons resent the notion that all the giving is from God and all the thanksgiving from us.

And yet it was a pretty rugged sort of a character, one who was never suspected of over-much passivity of temper, or charged with lack of res-

olution, it was John the Baptist who declared "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." This is a conclusion wholly consonant with the one the physicists have arrived at in their sphere. Energy is a very real thing, this world of ours is full of it; the roar of the ocean reminds us of its presence, the rattle of the shafting of ten thousand mills tells of our success in harnessing it; by aid of energy stored up in coal we warm our homes and cook our food and light our streets. But did we originate it? Has any soul of man evolved it? Can even this great world which we inhabit claim the praise of having given birth to it? No, it is not human, nor is it even terrene, it is solar; it came here from without; it is a gift imparted. We men are not in any sense the authors of it, for it came down from that great father of lights, the Sun. It has been by power received that modern man has succeeded in tunnelling mountains and bridging arms of the sea. It is by power received that saints are made. So much for what I have called "our end of the line." We have begun at it because of its being the end where consciousness begins.

Here then is this living soul, all eagerness to see; what now shall we set over against it as the object of vision? I have already anticipated the answer,—God and the things of God. Among the beatitudes, that one has always been reck-

oned the foremost which is assigned to the pure in heart. They are pronounced Blessed because to them it is to be given to see God. The beatitude you observe centres in the vision of a person. This is as it should be, and ought not to surprise anybody to whom the lesser beatitudes of our ordinary life are familiar. It is true that things;—gems, flowers, pictures, have a certain power of pleasing us, but no interest is so intense as that kindled by personality. History itself has been charged with being only a more dignified variety of gossip. Curiosity to see famous people is one of the most insistent of the appetites. The sightseer runs out of the palace, or at least takes to the window, when told that the king is passing in the street. To look at the man himself is infinitely better than gazing on the old armor and dingy pictures that interest chiefly because they happen to be his inherited possessions. But there are degrees and tide-marks even in this sort of enjoyment, for while it is true that persons interest us more than things, yet all persons do not interest us alike. And what is the differentiating quality that makes one person better worth seeing than another? Why is it that the crowd on the sidewalk cheers the one thousandth man while the nine hundred and ninety-nine pass by in silence? Always, invariably, because of some special excellency supposed to attach to him, and to none

other in the column. The supposition may be an erroneous one; the crowd may be under an illusion, the marked man may be wholly devoid of those characteristics, the imagined presence of which draws the approving cry from the people's lips, but unless there were believed to be something admirable in him he would not be admired, unless deemed praiseworthy he would not get the praise. The drift of the beatitude is, you see, quite in the line of what we should expect, for if it be natural to man to take delight in seeing the person,—call him soldier, poet, statesman, artist, who embodies or is supposed to embody some peculiar and distinguishing excellency, it must also be natural to him, in the very best and deepest sense that adjective can bear, to rejoice in looking upon the one person in whom all excellences meet. In a word the ideal which is to entrance the soul must be a personal ideal. Have not all the deepest utterances of the past been to this effect? "Thou, O God, art the thing that I long for": "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." It is here that the great Christian doctrine of the Incarnation helps us. The creed sets before the spiritual eye an impersonated God, a Being whom we can intelligently adore. While the philosophers are wrangling over the possibility of man's ever attaining to a knowledge of the Infinite and the Absolute, the Christian believer is quietly saying to himself,



“What do I care whether an abstraction be knowable or unknowable? My religion centres not in a concept of the mind, but in One outside of the mind, One who knows and loves and wills, One who is infinite spherically, the only sense in which character can be infinite, infinite as a round globe is infinite, infinite simply because perfect.” Depend upon it, it is this disposition to define deity in terms of the calculus that is driving God out of our horizon. Think of Him under the terms of personality, and He comes back again. Why should we be so strenuous in insisting that unless we can know Him perfectly it is not worth our while to endeavor to know Him at all? Try to do justice to that figure I just now used,—the figure of the sphere. I count it no hardship that I am unable to look at both sides of a globe at the same time, for it is written in the nature of things, made part of the everlasting covenant, that so it should be. I am a fool if I allow this limitation of the sense of sight to spoil my enjoyment of so much of Aldebaran or Jupiter as happens to be turned my way. Vision is a blessed thing, even when it is imperfect vision. To see in part is better than to be blind.

Let us concede frankly and without reserve the point that the finite cannot comprehend the infinite. How foolish of any one ever to have suggested, if any one ever did suggest, that it

could. But does religion require of us that we comprehend the infinite? If it does it must be somewhere without the covers of the Bible, for nowhere within those covers does it do so. The Christian religion has a great deal to say, as the Hebrew religion had before it, about the duty of knowing God, but there is no single word in either Old Testament or New to enjoin the duty or to guarantee the privilege of knowing the Infinite. And why not? For this good and sufficient reason, the Infinite is simply another word for the boundless, the immeasurable, that which is without shore, limit or margin, whereas God is a personal being, no more to be mistaken for or confounded with such abstractions as "infinity" than an eagle is to be mistaken for or confounded with the atmosphere through which he flies, or the dolphin mistaken for or confounded with the ocean through which he swims. The moment we get firm grasp upon this distinction between a mere idea, a mere notion, and real actual personality, the plausible talk of the men who would fain persuade us not even to attempt to begin to know God falls flat; for everyday experience teaches us that no matter how much exalted one person may be above another by dint of stronger will power, or keener intellect, or more strenuous feelings, the simple fact that they are both of them persons makes not only knowledge of the greater by the

lesser, but a steady increase in such knowledge entirely possible. Though the cup cannot hold the waters of the sea, it can hold sea water. I have met ever so many people who were my superiors, but I never met anybody whom it would be impossible for me to know on that account. For, when we think of it, this doctrine that the lesser person cannot know the greater would, if true, be as fatal to friendship as it is to religion. Where are the two friends whose characters are so absolutely alike, whose natural gifts so precisely correspond, whose acquired aptitudes and habits are in such complete equivalence, that for one of them to know himself is the same thing as his knowing the other? The very suggestion refutes itself. In all personal acquaintance there is this difference of better and worse, larger and smaller, more and less, and to say that because of this the poorer cannot know the richer but must remain all his life long agnostic toward him, that is to say totally ignorant of him, is to pronounce the death sentence of human society itself, for it is only by dint of our knowing one another that we mortals are able to hold together at all. Even if it could be shown that between God and man there was a gulf fixed similar in kind to that which severs the brute creation from the human, knowledge of some sort would still be possible. The dog "knows his master," we say. It is a very

elementary and vague knowledge, to be sure, something widely different from that "finding out unto perfection" of which Zophar speaks, but knowledge of a real sort it is. It is a knowledge that can carry with it obedience and affection, two very considerable elements in a complete religion. In fact man may be said to stand to the domesticated animals in the place of God. They look up to him, they feel their dependence upon him, they do him service. "A blind service," you say, "unintelligent, the product of fear." Yes, perhaps so, I am not asking you to make your own a brutish religion. But it is just possible that there may be men and women who are rendering to their heavenly God a service not half so loyal or so helpful, as these poor dumb creatures give to their human deity. Isaiah evidently was of this opinion, for he said, "The ox knoweth his owner, but Israel doth not know." Had ever Agnosticism, ancient or modern, a more stinging rebuke than that? Shall the ox, man's slave, know enough of man to obey him, and yet man, God's child, not know enough of God to obey Him?

But I spoke of the object of vision as twofold, God I said, and the things of God. We have seen where the difference lies between knowing God as an actual living Being and trying to know Him as a blank metaphysical abstraction.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The dominant fallacy of the "Christian Scientists."

But even personal knowledge, as we call it, admits of a certain amount of formulation. The better I know my friend the more competent I become to tell out or to write out my thoughts about him. In fact if I analyze what I call my knowledge of such persons as I have never seen in the flesh, I find that it is largely made up of information as to what they may have said and done. Now this is precisely what the Bible purports to be. It is a setting forth of what the Living God is believed to have said and done in connection with his creature man. It is the turning on of light. But does it clear up everything? And if it does not clear up everything have you and I a right to be discontented and to fret? These questions are worth answering.

All of the more urgent of the questions of religion fall under one or other of three heads; they are either questions that, in the light of God's revelation in Christ, can be completely answered, or they are questions that can be answered in part, or they are questions that cannot be answered at all.

Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? There is a question answerable in full. Lord, and what shall this man do? There is a question answerable only in part. Lord, are there few that be saved? There is a question answerable not at all, since "Strive to enter in at the straight gate" is not so much answer, as command,

To begin with the unanswerable questions ;— Arnold of Rugby, himself the very embodiment of intellectual healthiness and spiritual sanity, said with respect to these sealed problems of the mind, what perhaps cannot be better said, when he wrote,—“ Before a confessed and palpably unconquerable difficulty the mind, if in a healthy state, reposes as quietly as when in possession of a discovered truth.”

A frank acceptance of Jesus Christ as Light of the World is a wonderful help to a man in his endeavor to ascertain where the line runs that marks off the undiscoverable, or rather the untraversable regions of truth, from those habitable portions of the mind's domain where we may sow and reap and plant vineyards, and feel that we are at home. The silence of Christ with respect to these questions which cannot be answered at all is one of the specially strong testimonies to his divinity. He had the courage to tell His disciples, over and over again, that there were things they must be content, here in this world, never to know. He opened luminous pathways hither and thither into the darkness, but their cloudy walls were as adamant to the touch. There was to be no going beyond them by a hair's breadth to the right hand or to the left. Had He been the prophet of smooth things which all prophets are under urgent temptations to let themselves become, how much He might

have said that would have brought Him applause and gratitude. But no! He had the divine art of holding his peace. Certain things He had come empowered and instructed to tell, the rest was to remain unrevealed, and unrevealed He left it to the very end. The longer we study the books of the loquacious prophets of the false religions the better shall we appreciate this reticence of the Christ. In our religious explorations, we shall save ourselves, depend upon it, a deal of trouble, if we turn back without complaint or delay from every point of approach where his hand has plainly written "No thoroughfare." To find ourselves thus blocked, when the errands upon which we have set out are certain to prove fruitless, is a blessing in disguise. To know that there are some things we cannot know, is one of the beginnings of wisdom. Christian preachers and teachers make a harmful mistake when they assure men that, if they will only accept the faith, all difficulties in the way of a clear perception of spiritual truth will be removed. Paul was wiser. We see but by enigma, he declares, darkly and dimly as in the metallic mirror.

But before we pass, as presently I shall ask you to do, from this dim region of the unknowable, where lie such ancient problems as the origin of the evil that is in the world, the reconciliation of God's providence with man's freedom, the appearance of inequity in the sufferings

endured by little children, and other like difficulties and perplexities, let me meet a question which has doubtless already arisen in the minds of some. Why, if the Christian faith confesses itself baffled by these hard questions, has the Christian faith any special claim on our regard? I meet this by observing that even though the Christian faith fail to tell us what we would like to know upon these points, we gain nothing by looking elsewhere for the light. Suppose we do turn our backs on Christ, and go in search of another torch-bearer who shall guide us in to all the truth,—to whom shall we go? There is “neither voice nor any to answer.” Charlatans there are, indeed, without number who will undertake the leadership with a light heart and for a pittance. But beware of their perilous aid. They are blind leaders of the blind. Before nightfall, they will have landed us in the slough of despond. But enough of the insoluble problems, let us pass to the answerable and partly answerable questions of religion. Here is one. Is the power that keeps the universe in motion, wheels the stars in their orbits, tints the plumage of birds and feeds the flow of rivers, is this a blind unconscious “force,” impartially cruel in its dealings with the children of men, or is there fatherhood behind it and a providing care? No thoughtful mind that has intrusted itself to the leadership of Jesus Christ will complain of being



dealt with ambiguously here, for Our Master betrays on this point neither reticence nor reserve. This is a matter in which it is absolutely necessary that we should know the truth, if we are to be religious at all, and He tells it to us promptly. Of the sparrows you may buy five for a farthing, He says, but not one of them is forgotten before God. The inference is plain. Are not ye much better worth caring for than they?

Yes, but can it be possibly worth our while to approach, with such poor stammering words as we may coin, a Majesty so high as this? Is not prayer futile? Nay, worse than this, do we not convict ourselves of an intolerable vanity in entertaining for a moment the thought of speaking to this Heavenly King? Again, we have an answer from the same lips. "When ye pray say 'Our Father.'" It is not if ye pray say "O Force," or "O Law," or "O Nature," or "O changeless and unalterable Doom," but it is,—When ye pray, (the habit being taken for granted), say "Our Father." "Nay, but I ask," you say to me, "stronger assurance of the love of God even than this. That in a certain sense and in a certain measure the Power unseen provides for the bodily wants of the creatures with which the earth has been peopled is credible enough. That He, or it, giveth to the beast his food, and feedeth the young ravens which cry, natural history might teach us without aid from Scripture, but

their case is not my case. They keep the law He has laid down for them, they walk in the paths appointed, and in their several orders, and after their manner, live as they were meant to live; but I, alas, I am tormented with a conscience, I see and know that I have wronged the lawgiver. How can I think of myself as on speaking terms with this King to whom you would have me say 'Our Father,' uninformed as I am of any willingness on His part to forgive? Fire burns and water drowns irrespective of repentance. They pardon no one, why should God pardon me?" Here, again, it is absolutely necessary for us to be rightly informed if we would be at peace, but what of our Leader, our Light-bearer, is He silent? does He refuse a plain answer? Listen to Him. "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." He is more than prophet, it appears, this Christ of ours, He is absolver, He has power on earth to forgive. Clearly it is not without authority, that He adds to the request for nourishment, "Give us this day our daily bread," the prayer for pardon "Forgive us our trespasses." Surely He would not tell us thus to pray if forgiveness were impossible.

But you ask for some evidence of divine love better even than this, and you are right. The love which manifests itself through the distribution of bounty is good as far as it goes, for it is gener-

osity as contrasted with stinginess ; but even Nature shows us a parable of love deeper than this. The mother bird fluttering over her brood and with unfailing and impartial care filling each tiny throat is a beautiful sight, and images with absolute fidelity one aspect of parental love, but the mother bird suddenly made bold to suffer, yes, to die rather than let the nest and its precious burden come to harm is a symbol of something higher than providence, whether divine or human, it is the sign of sacrifice. For the love which costs the giver nothing we have respect, we are thankful to receive it, we rejoice in the possession of it, but does it satisfy the heart, does it come home to us as the very best thing imaginable ? No, there is a love mightier than this, the love which many waters cannot quench, the love which consents, nay which desires, in evidence of its own genuineness to suffer. This is sacrificial love. We can dream of nothing higher.

Now is there anything in God that corresponds to this ? If not, we are shut up to the disappointing conclusion that in our human relations there is something more precious than we can ever hope to see realized in our divine relations. If our fellow-man has something to give us better worth seeking than anything our God can offer, then is religion emptied of its supreme motive, the desire to find the very best. Again I point you to our Leader. Of his coming He says

"God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son." Sacrifice, you notice, at the very outset, that sacrifice of which the manger is the emblem. But again as the end approaches this is what we hear. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." And this He meant of the manner of his dying. Sacrifice again at the very last; the sacrifice of the cross. Herein, whether first or last, is a love worth the calling such.

There remains another question still, the question of the future,—If a man die shall he live again? Will the leadership of Christ win for us the greatest of all victories, the conquest of the fear of dying? He leaves us in no doubt upon the point. "I am the resurrection and the life," He says. "Because I live ye shall live also." Fountain of life Himself He becomes the giver of it to all who will receive it. Other religions have guessed at immortality and dreamed of it. Christ's religion offers it.

Spiritualists commend to us their ghastly caricature of heaven; Buddha, the Light of Asia, bids us take comfort in the thought that as the raindrop falls into the great ocean and survives by being swallowed up, so the soul shall find true peace and rest in an everlasting forgetfulness. Comte urges us to expel the subject from our

thoughts and to be content with the immortality of the race; The Son of Mary, separate from them all, though with a heart full of compassion for them all, stands forth and says, In my Father's house there are abiding places many. I go to make ready one of them for you.

Pause now, for a moment, that we may count up our gains. It seemed, at the outset, as if we were ruling out almost all the great questions of religion when we dismissed so many of them to the region of the insoluble. But that was a mistake, for we now see how generous is the territory in which under the leadership of the Christ, conquests may be made and held.

The being and the fatherhood of God, the reasonableness of prayer, the possibility of forgiveness, the measureless intensity of the love that reaches us through sacrifice, the confident expectation of a life to come,—are these gains on the side of belief inconsiderable? On the contrary are they not fruits of victory for which we cannot too vehemently or too fervently give thanks? It may be objected that this cumulative argument of mine makes everything hinge upon personal confidence in the testimony of a single witness; One who in His day and time called Himself Son of Man. So it does. You are quite right. I have no wish to evade the point: on the contrary, I desire to urge it with all my might. You say, What are the credentials of

this Christ, that we should be asked thus to recognize Him as supreme pontiff of mankind? His credentials, I answer, are his words and his works. His words live for us in the Gospels, fresh as on the day when they were first spoken, germinant with life and prodigal of light as never other words have been. His works? They are around us. Christendom is his architecture. Who has ever builded as He builds? The city to be sure is far from perfect. It has its empty spaces, its half-finished streets and squares; here and there are pedestals for which the statues are not ready and niches waiting to be filled; in all directions there is room for growth, and in many room for betterment; but take it for all in all, was there ever city like it? ever one so firmly founded? ever one so generously laid out? And all this marvellous Christendom, this unmatched social fabric is his work. He made it as really as the great Tsar made Petersburg or Constantine his Eastern capital. Has He not as Architect of such a city of God some claim on our attention? Some right to be heard in those matters upon which, with unmistakable authority in his voice, He speaks? I grant you that it is possible to reject Him as your light-bearer, but is it wise? Trust Him then I say, for his words and for his works.

Doing this you will find the difficulties that connect themselves with the Bible, its inspiration,

its self-consistency, its oneness disappear like mist touched by the sun. Looked at as the biography of the Son of God, and as the chronicle of the world's preparation for his coming, the Bible will at once take its right place in your mind as holding the same relation to the things God has done, is doing, and means to do for man, that the printed text of a drama or oratorio holds to the action on the stage. A misprint here or there in your copy of *Paradise Lost* does not shake your confidence in Milton's authorship. The heroic grandeur of the characters he puts before us is what authenticates the poet. The personality of Christ is the vindication of the Bible.

Throughout this discussion I have avoided dwelling, upon detached and specific difficulties of faith for the reason that I wanted to do better than merely to propound certain set answers to certain set questions.

I might have said, See,—here is a lock, and here is a bundle of keys, let us work over them until we find the one that fits. Instead of that I have sought to fashion a master key to which every bolt should yield.

**III.**  
**LAW.**





### III.

#### LAW.

OUR third monosyllable is LAW. How stands Law related to Religion, and Religion to Law?

Christian theists have no need of any better definition of Law than that which carries the sanction of the great name of Austin. "Law is the command of the sovereign."

The Christian conception of the universe is before all else monarchical. Democracies that have no monarchy back of them in the world invisible are packed with the seeds of dissolution. Parliaments and Congresses must speak "as the oracles of God" or their statutes will drop into the waste-basket of time. Behind the hustings stands the throne.

In the Book of Common Prayer the Collect of Thanksgiving for victory after a sea-fight, begins thus,—“O Almighty God, the Sovereign Commander of all the World.” For “World” read “Universe,” and we have a form of words in which men, angels and archangels may unite. We can conceive of no habitable planet where the invocation would be out of place; so central, and yet so omnipresent a thing, as theists look at it, is will-power.

For the first mention of Law we have to go back to the beginnings of the Bible. There we find it, before we have read a paragraph. And God said, "Let there be light: and there was light,"—all these conceptions, you observe, the sovereign, his commandment, and the consequent effect, within the compass of a dozen words. I cannot help wondering whether Richard Hooker had not this mandatory transformation of chaos into cosmos in his mind when, in the most sonorous and musical of all the sentences of English prose, he declared of law that her voice is "the harmony of the world."

In the present discussion I shall claim for the theistic conception of law these three signal advantages, all of which are closely linked to one another.

First, that it is a great clarifier, purging the whole current of our thought with respect to both universes—the seen and the unseen.

Secondly, that it has room in it for the two apparently conflicting senses in which the jurists and the naturalists respectively speak of law; and,

Thirdly, that it is not irreconcilable with the Christian doctrine of prayer.

These are large claims.

In asserting for the theistic conception of law, first of all, the merit of clearness, I do not overlook the obvious criticism to which I lay myself

open by so doing—Why in the world, it may very naturally be asked, should we expect simplicity in such a connection? Compare other departments of research. Is it not the fact that the higher we go in Mathematics the more difficult the study becomes, until finally, methods of demonstration are reached which only half a dozen minds in the whole world can follow or appreciate? How foolish, then, would seem to be the search for a formula which shall be at once final and intelligible!

To all this, I might, if I chose, reply by the method of parable, pointing to the fact that both in mechanics and in art the pathway of progress invariably works itself through the thicket of complexity out into the open of simplicity. The fewer the parts to which the inventor can reduce his machine the prouder he is of it. The gun-carriage of to-day is a more powerful contrivance than the gun-carriage of fifty years ago, but it puzzles the eye far less.

Certain delineators of the infinitely little, had they had the opportunity, would have put into the Sistine Madonna a great deal that is not there, but their doing so would have spoiled the picture, for it would have obscured the simple outline which commends that particular mother and child to the catholic heart of man. But setting imagery aside, as far as it is possible to do so, let us argue the question on its merits. What

makes the higher mathematics difficult to master is not that the study requires an acquaintance with new principles of reasoning, the like of which have no place in Arithmetic and Algebra and Geometry, but rather that it overtaxes the power of the ordinary mind to grasp many things at once. Each separate act of assent of which the mind is conscious in this difficult region of thought is, of and by itself, an act of which any intelligent youth would be capable; it is the keeping the whole number of the assents simultaneously in the mind, and noting the relations between them that demands an intellect at once capacious and tenacious. This point comes out even more clearly in connection with the mixed sciences, say Physics and Chemistry, than anywhere else. The great generalizations that have turned men's ways of thinking about the material world topsy-turvy, are all of them expressed in singularly simple terms. The men who first made the generalizations had to go through fire and water to find the golden key, but the key when found is not remarkable either for the number or the intricacy of the ward-notches. Take Dalton's Law, or Faraday's Law, or Mariotte's Law,—there is nothing occult or forbidding in the language of it. It is level to the apprehension of a child. In fact the very essence of the benefit which a great discoverer confers on his fellow-men is that he puts into their hands a

clew which makes it possible for anybody to travel easily and safely in the labyrinth where he was the pioneer. With a great sum obtained he this freedom, but all who come in his succession are free-born. The terrors of the forest are for the man who blazes the path, presently the trail becomes a road, and the road a highway.

Now, the great postulate of theism is this ; that there exists One of whom and through whom and to whom are all things, and that there inheres in this Being perfectly the faculty which we, imperfectly and dimly, apprehend under the name of will. Some may be disappointed at my using so modest a word as "postulate." They would rather have me say axiom. But it seems scarcely fair to speak of any proposition as axiomatic from which considerable numbers of our fellow-creatures are known to withhold their assent, and it is notorious that there are whole races which disclaim faith in a supreme will, great systems of religion which while overshadowing entire countries have yet in them not so much as standing room for a throne.

But postulates, after they have been long tried and have proved themselves thoroughly serviceable, become to us as axioms, and the clamor raised against them by the few ceases to distress us. Civil society for example rests on postulates ; they are the very pillars of the State, and yet were it not for the occasional report of a dyna-

mite bomb, it would scarcely occur to us to remember that the said postulates are disallowed, and passionately disallowed, by the unanimous vote of the whole sect of the anarchists. So then, persuaded that there are some propositions which while neither axiomatic nor even, in the strict sense of the word, demonstrable, are nevertheless, for practical purposes, of the utmost value, we pass on to consider a little more fully the contents of this great postulate of Theism, never more eloquently stated than by the Son of Sirach,—“He that liveth for ever created all things, and there is none other but He, who governeth the world with the palm of his hand, and all things obey his will: for He is the King of All.” ‘Dreadfully anthropomorphic!’ you exclaim;—Yes, yes, no doubt; but the question is whether, being in the form of man, it is possible for us to be anything but anthropomorphic in our modes of thoughts; whether in other words, the ridding ourselves of all things human be a feasible preliminary step to our study of things divine. How should we ever, for example, arrive at such a poor and inadequate notion of the thing called power as we actually have were it not for our early becoming conscious that we are powers ourselves? The little child building up his blocks on the play-room floor and tumbling them down again by a stroke of his hand, finds that he has it in him to bring results to pass, to change the look of things, and he

laughs with delight. It is the birth of the consciousness of power. Presently, coming too near the fire, or receiving a blow from some falling object, he perceives that there are other powers in existence besides the power in himself, powers which may help him or hurt him, according as he uses them or lets himself be used by them. Gradually, too, as he grows up, he learns the meaning of such words as "shall" and "must," in fact, of the whole vocabulary of command, and so he comes to see that aside and apart from the power resident in things, in the fire that scorches and in the stone that bruises him, there is another sort of power which is exercised by persons. As he grows older still, he discovers that this power exercised by persons is not confined to the particular persons at whose hands he first encountered it, but that it has been distributed upon a very large scale indeed and is the thing mainly depended upon for keeping the human family quiet. In thus unearthing from the soil of the playground, as one might say, the germ of the true philosophy alike of the natural and of the social order, we are but following the example of Christ Himself, who when He would teach his disciples a lesson of peculiar difficulty began by setting in the midst of them a little child. They are transferring psychology just now from the class-room to the laboratory; would it be so very much amiss if they were to take the



nursery on their way? Possibly the next best thing to studying the mind through the nerves would be observation of the sorts of messages these same nerves carry to the brain before the tissues of that organ have become infiltrated with prejudice. A strong mind engaged in reasoning from a false premise is like a powerful locomotive off the track: the more strenuous the play of the machinery the greater the dust and the confusion.

Because a popular philosophy happens to be making a tremendous whirr and buzz, it does not follow that it is conveying us swiftly to our destination. Possibly the despised theologian with his distressingly simple and childlike premise of a certain omnipresent will of God active in nature and active in society as well, enthroned at the heart of things yet regnant also at the very outermost line of being; possibly, I say, this poor imbecile of a theologian may turn out in the end to have been the better reasoner of the two, and that not in virtue of any superiority of intellectual stature, but because the supposition rejected by the advanced thinker on the score of its crudity and naïvete has been found to be correct.

Yes, there is an unspeakable advantage in being on the preordained track, simple and stupid and tiresome and monotonous as the two rails, stretching out into an infinite perspective, may appear. This postulate of a divine will

back of all things is, it must be acknowledged, ever so old, and ever so familiar, and its friends know perfectly well that it would be futile for them to raise the cry of Lo here! and Lo there! but we certainly have colorable pretext for our method in the tart avowal of Voltaire, that if there were no God it would be necessary to invent one. The Frenchman saw, with the perspicacity of his race, that atheism, however entertaining as a speculation, would prove but an indifferent cement for society, and he preferred that the building should last out his time.

We are in a position now to clear up the ambiguity which attaches to Law as the word is used throughout the whole territory of natural science. Here it may be called the foundling among words, for if ever parentage was disowned and pedigree concealed this is the instance.

Law, as judges and juries understand it, means a command, Law, as chemists and physicists understand it, is simply a formula indicative of the observed order in which phenomena occur.

Law, then, as used by natural science is from the jural point of view a purely metaphorical term, a simile, a figure of speech. As such, it consorts perfectly with that other figure which we employ whenever we speak of the "kingdoms" of nature,—the animal kingdom, the vegetable kingdom and the mineral kingdom. It is not a

little singular that science, supposed to be so prosaic, should, in this matter, show herself so poetical, and yet the fact is as I have put it, the "laws of nature" are a figure of speech.

This was never more happily or more succinctly put than by the army officer who came to Jesus with the request that He would heal his servant. "There is no need of your coming down to my house," he said, "that is an honor of which I am entirely unworthy. I recognize in You a strong executive. Being in the army I know what discipline means, and just as my men obey me when I choose to give an order, so will Nature's legions obey You, if You make known your wish. Speak the word only and my servant shall be healed." That is the substance of what he said, and it gives us in a nut-shell the origin of the phrase "laws of nature." No wonder that our Lord, astonished at the man's insight, should have exclaimed,—"I have not found so great faith!"

Take for example Bode's Law with respect to the distances of the planets from the sun. Bode observed the fact that these planetary intervals approximately corresponded to the sum of four and some multiple of three, so that beginning with Mercury the series ran, 4, 7, 10, 16, 28, etc. But does any body suppose that otherwise than figuratively "the most ancient heavens" are subject to this law? Has Bode's Law

of the solar system anything more than a metaphorical relation to, say, Moses' Law of the Social system?

Or take that curious law of molecular physics whereby it is possible for one gas to interpenetrate another without increase of total volume or tension. This, to be sure, comes nearer to a law in the proper sense of the word than the other did, since in the movement of the molecules there is something that more closely resembles obedience than we find in the orderly spacing of the heavenly bodies. And yet how evident it is that here also we are using purely figurative speech when we talk of the "law" under which each gas becomes a vacuum to every other gas. We cannot seriously think of the various molecules as scrambling into the vacant places they are to occupy, in the same spirit in which the Centurion's soldiers fell into line at his order. Law, in the proper sense of the word, points to a relation between wills, the will that has a right to command and the will that has a duty to obey. A law is simply a verbal statement of the thing which ought to be done. But "ought" is a word that has no meaning outside of social relations. It is a personal, a purely personal word. So long as we are dealing with men "ought" is everything, but when we begin dealing with molecules, there is, no "ought" about it; and this not because will has no relation to things, for it

has a very real relation to them, but because the relation in which will stands to persons is a wholly different relation from that in which it stands to things.

So then the phrase "spiritual law in the natural world," which some are proposing to substitute for the egregiously misleading one "natural law in the spiritual world," while an improvement, in that it puts the horse before the cart where he should be if he is to be harnessed at all, is not the improvement we really want. The whole truth would be better expressed in some such phrase as this, The will of God, active in orderly fashion in both worlds, and in such wise active in them both that the lower is made to us the symbol and parable of the higher. This has the disadvantage of length, but the advantage of accuracy; for it traces up to the one throne of God the impulses which simultaneously thrill the world ponderable, which we call Nature, and the world imponderable which we name Spirit. The muscles of Abraham Lincoln's hand worked in accordance with natural law when he signed the proclamation of emancipation; that was will acting upon things. But the manual process of writing was but sign and token of that higher act of will by which the President had already determined to free the slaves. And yet it was in one and the same brain that both volitions, the greater and the less had origin. Ability to grasp

the resemblance between these two modes of the will's activity without blurring the distinction and to discern the distinction without becoming blind to the resemblance, is one of the tests of the theologian.

A disposition is showing itself just now among some timid souls to compromise one of the gravest interests of religion by identifying what the prophets call "the Spirit" with what the physicists call energy. "Now that the naturalists are gradually resolving all the "forces," as they used to name them, into the one force, let us," so these lovers of peace at any price urge, "meet our friends the enemy half-way, and so revise the ancient creed of Christendom that it shall begin 'I believe in one force, otherwise called God.'"

But we must remember that there is a better thing than peace at any price, namely peace with honor, and that this latter is an end to which we can never attain by surrendering possession of what does not belong to us. The doctrine of a personal and purposeful God who both controls things and governs persons is, to be sure, ours, but not, as the children say, "ours to give away," it is ours in trust. If we take to worshipping Almighty God under the name Force we shall very soon forget how to worship Him under his name Love.

Christian theology safeguards us against this peril by insisting upon the epithet Holy. "We

believe" so runs the third paragraph of the Nicene Creed, "We believe in the Holy Ghost." A "Holy" Spirit must be one that discriminates, that knows a difference between goodness and badness, between right and wrong, between what is clean and what is foul, between falsehood and the truth. No such discerning faculty as this attaches to mere force.

We cannot shape our lips to sing, "O Holy Force." But thought of as Holy Spirit, God becomes to us something more than the architect and builder of the eternal city, we see Him also as the Father and the King of the vast family the walls enclose. Think too of the solemnity which this conception of deity imports into the commonest and least conspicuous of lives. If the Bible view of nature glorifies and ennobles, as it does glorify and ennoble all the scenery of earth by suggesting the constant presence and activity in forest, field and ocean of the creative Spirit, infinitely more powerfully ought this conception of the Spirit as holy to remind us what a momentous thing it is to have a conscience and to know right from wrong.

But I must not forget my promise to speak of the bearing of the theistic conception of law upon the Christian doctrine of prayer. Many people have given up praying in our day because of the conviction forced upon them that in a universe governed by natural laws it is absurd to

suppose that mere supplication can have efficacy or result. But is this sorrowful conclusion of theirs sound?

First, then, I observe that to speak of the world as governed by "natural laws" is to beg the whole question.

The Christian contention is that the world is governed by God, not by "laws." That He governs it in a systematic and orderly manner is perfectly true; it would be most unfortunate for us if He did not. The miracles so-called, serve an important end in reminding us, as they do, that God has in his universe a great wealth of resources upon which He can draw at need, and that the things we see are no measure of the things we might see were He disposed to show them to us. If it had stood written in the Gospels that on one occasion a sentence spoken by Jesus in his natural voice at Capernaum was heard by Mary and Martha at Bethany, that would have counted as a miracle down to the invention of the telephone some twenty years ago. The miracles serve a purpose by giving us assurance of God's freedom, his ability to move so to speak in any direction at will. By them we are powerfully reminded that the maker of the instrument is greater than the instrument, and that nature is God's organ not his prison. But while all this is true, ought it not also to be remembered, (as I was just now saying), that the regularity of the stated order of



things has also an inestimable value of its own, in the schooling of the soul. If exceptions are useful in their way, so are rules even more useful still. Were miracles affairs of everyday occurrence life would be thrown into confusion; we should never know what to expect. There would be the same uneasy sense of apprehension that possesses the dweller in an earthquake region, where no one can foresee what is to happen next. Christ Himself never laid that exaggerated stress upon his miracles which some of his more recent defenders seem to have thought necessary. He was wont to call them "signs," rather than marvels, and utterly refused to work them when it was evidently a mere morbid love of prodigy that moved people to ask for them. The Tempter won no miracle from Him by taunt, nor Herod by entreaty. His aim was to persuade people to believe in a Providence at work behind the outward framework of everyday Nature; and, without any visible and manifest dislocation of her methods, making all things work together for good. This is that confidence in a Father of lights who is without variableness, which moved Sir Thomas Browne to say in a well-remembered sentence, "Now for my life, it is a miracle of thirty years." I do not understand that wise man and good Christian to have meant by this that his life had been full of extraordinary events, unaccountable prodigies, and

violent suspensions of the usual order of nature, but simply that looking back over his thirty years he could see in them so clearly the guiding hand of a promise-keeping God, that to doubt seemed to him a sort of treason. All through his life's journey a heavenly friend had been walking along beside him separated only by a wall of gauze, and this was miracle enough for him. And so we ought to think of answers to prayer as brought about, not in spite of the forces of nature, but rather through such a guidance of those forces as is only possible with Him who holds all the reins in his Hand. No teacher of religion was ever half so lavish in his promise of answer to prayer as Jesus was, and yet He did not say "Ask, and in your case fire shall lose its burning power, the knife its edge, the sea its saltiness." What He did say was "Ask, and ye shall receive,"—a very different way of putting it.

The position I lay down is this that the habit, of Jesus Christ in his capacity of teacher is to announce great principles or laws in their purity, without reference for the moment to any other principles or laws which may possibly have a modifying and alterative effect. His usage in this respect differs widely from that of the writers of text-books whose custom is to state a rule and then follow it up with a long string of exceptions.

Jesus Christ in his capacity of supreme master of the spiritual life makes his great affirmations, and leaves it to his disciples to discover with such aid as they can gather from the parables of Nature and from their own experience how these affirmations modify and qualify one another by their interaction. See how this applies not only to what Christ says of prayer but to the whole list of hard sayings about conduct contained in the Sermon on the Mount.

One of the most fruitful instruments of progress in the work of modern discovery has been Sir Isaac Newton's memorable statement of the three laws of motion. Let us take the first of them, lay it alongside of the statement "Ask and ye shall receive," and see what follows.

The first law of motion, as Newton puts it, asserts that a body continues in its state of uniform motion in a straight line except in so far as it is compelled by force to change that state. A cannon ball, that is to say, once started upon a straight line, is bound in accordance with the first law of motion, to continue moving in the same direction and at the same speed thenceforth and forever. Upon the assumption that this is true, the whole science of modern astronomy with its splendid record not merely of facts observed but of events predicted is built up. And yet, since the world began, there never has been a projectile set in motion that acted in this way.

The cannon ball was never fired that went on moving without loss of speed or change of direction from the moment of its leaving the gun's muzzle until now. And why not? Simply because of the existence of other principles, besides the principle embodied in the first law of motion, which have also something to say.

There is a force of attraction, for instance, which begins to draw the arrow toward the earth, the moment it quits the bow, and there is also the resistance of the atmosphere which at every single point in the projectile's flight avails to obstruct and to retard. And yet, for all that, the first law of motion remains true, and unless, to start with, we accept it as true and take it for one of our guiding principles, we find anything like real progress in the study of Nature's ways impossible.

"You ask me to state the first principles of the perfect life," Christ virtually says. "Very well, I proceed to state them; and I shall state them, one after another, in their pure simplicity, their naked outline. It is for you to discover how in real life they touch and alter one another."

Here is the law of purity: "If thy right eye do cause thee to offend, pluck it out and cast it from thee." Here is the law of truthfulness: "Let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay." Here is the law of passive goodness: "Resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right

cheek, turn to him the other also." Here is the law of beneficence: "Give to him that asketh thee." Here is the law of accumulation: "Lay not up treasures on earth, but lay up treasures in heaven." Here is the law of supply: "Take no thought for your life what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on." Here is the law of criticism: "Judge not that ye be not judged." And here, last of all, is the law of prayer: "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened."

There is not one of these great principles that is not fundamental to righteousness, there is not one of them that could be spared from the perfect code. At the same time there is not one of them which admits of being acted upon alone and by itself, without respect to the companion principles to which it stands related.

In fact if we were to leave out of account the single saying among them all which presupposes an evil heart, setting it aside as irrelevant to the case of Him who was "without spot of sin," it might truthfully be said of the others that our Lord Himself violated the letter of every one of them.

He broke the letter of the "Yea, yea, and nay, nay," injunction every time He emphasized an utterance by "Verily, verily I say unto you." He broke the letter of the non-resistance maxim when He remonstrated with the palace official for

unjustly smiting Him on the face. He broke the letter of the law of beneficence when he said to the Pharisees asking a sign of Him, "There shall no sign be given you." He broke the letter of the law of accumulation when he allowed Judas to be appointed treasurer for the Twelve. He broke the letter of the law of supply when He said "He that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one." And finally He witnessed in his own case to the limitations upon the law of prayer, when thrice He asked His Father that the cup of suffering He was about to taste might pass, but every time accompanied his request with words signifying that, after all, it might not be possible for the Eternal Father, consistently with the eternal purpose, to grant the thing desired.

Could we have better evidence to the point I have undertaken to make clear? We know that in every one of these apparent infractions of his own teaching, the Preacher of the Sermon on the Mount was absolutely and entirely right. In Him was no sin. Are we not then shut up to the conclusion that if we would rightly interpret the pronouncements of that memorable discourse we must do so, not by segregating each commandment, as Count Tolstoi, and many another misguided man of genius before him, has done, saying, Christianity stands or falls by our being able to carry out literally this or that injunction just as it reads, without reference to other and limiting

clauses of the same code ; but rather by taking the spiritual universe as the physicists take the natural universe *in the large*, convinced that bonds of kinship knit its various parts together, and that no otherwise save by patient comparison of principle with principle can we hope ever to understand the whole. The bearing of all this upon the question of Prayer is obvious.

The law of prayer is "Ask, and ye shall receive," but why should we insist upon so interpreting this as to make nonsense of it. We certainly do make nonsense of it when we insist that as a principle it breaks down unless it can be shown that every man who earnestly prefers a petition to Almighty God has the thing he asks for given to him.

Suppose two persons equally devout, equally earnest, equally sincere, pray opposite prayers. One of them in all honesty and with all eagerness prays that a certain event may happen and the other prays that it may not happen. One of the two men must inevitably be disappointed. But is the principle of prayer as enunciated by Jesus Christ contravened and brought to nought because of this? Not at all, far from it. The law of prayer as enunciated by Jesus Christ remains "Ask, and ye shall receive."

Believe, in other words, that God's wish and purpose is to take his children's desires and wishes into account, in his administration of the

affairs of the "far-spread family." He is not ruling us with the notion of destiny or doom. We are not shut up to a hard inevitable from which there is no escape. He takes us into His confidence. Let us have mutual intercourse, He says. "I have spoken to you, now speak to Me. By prophet, evangelist, apostle, nay by mine own Spirit in your hearts, I have been sending you word, from time to time, of what my purpose is. I have not withheld my Son, mine only Son. Now let Me hear your voice in response, my children, and let us understand each other."

That is the way in which the heavenly Father is speaking to us through the lips of Jesus Christ. How happy we should be if we could take Him at his word! if we could adapt ourselves to this plan of mutual confidence, the human side of which is expressed in the words "Ask, and ye shall receive." The truth is, we are continually letting this spectre of doom scare us out of our enjoyment of our rightful heritage. We listen to the tempter saying in plausible tones, "Why pray? Why pray? There is no use in it. The heavens are brass over your heads. No voice of yours can penetrate the cruel firmament. Let the whole thing alone. The world is nothing but a piece of hard mechanism. If you happen to ask for the thing that is bound by an inexorable decree to come whether you pray or not, well and good, otherwise you will be dis-



appointed." That is the way the tempter talks, but not so Jesus Christ. He has a better tale to tell than that, his is the cheerful outlook and the voice of hope. The power that rules the universe, He assures us, is fatherly, not cruel; and though this or that petition may seem to have died upon the air, though this or that request may apparently have failed to accomplish anything, we are not to suppose that therefore praying is of no use, or that all things would have been just the same had the prayer not been breathed. Our very asking makes a difference, whether the particular thing we ask for is given to us or not,—our very asking makes a difference, for the whole state of things in the spiritual universe is altered the moment one single soul passes from the non-praying into the praying mood. It is as natural for man to pray as it is natural to a child to believe. The child as he grows older comes to see that it is not safe to believe all that he hears. The man as he becomes more experienced learns to attach our Saviour's "If it be possible" to many a request from which in earlier life he was wont to leave it off. But as it remains true of the mind that notwithstanding our liability to illusion and deceit, faith is a better and more wholesome attitude than denial, so also does it remain true for the soul, that notwithstanding many a disappointment it is still wise to pray.

**IV.**  
**LOVE.**



## IV.

### LOVE.

WE have arrived at the crowning monosyllable of religion,—LOVE. Life, light and law have all been leading up to this. I shall have something to say of the origin of love, of the difficulty of believing that the world is ruled in the interest of love, and of the greater difficulty, of believing that it is not so ruled.

There is the more need of our pondering the origin of love because of the false interpretation which many hasty thinkers in our day are putting upon certain features of the social life of man. I have already spoken of the doctrine of evolution in terms that ought to free me from any suspicion of being a defamer of it. I stand committed to the position that some philosophy of evolution has become an absolute necessity, a prerequisite to success in any attempt we may make to widen the area of our acquaintance with the things of Nature. That the world has come to be what it is by a process of growth, and that this growth has proceeded after an orderly fashion, in such wise as to make some comprehension of it on our part a possible thing, are propositions to deny which is to fly in the face of

the plainest of facts. The Christian contention simply is that this process has been presided over and informed by an intelligent Being conscious of Himself and conscious of a purpose. In other words that evolution is a method, not a cause. This is why I was so strenuous to posit Life as the first of our four monosyllables. It was evident that only by starting from the premise of a living God, taking Him for granted, if you will, could we escape bringing up against an impassable stone wall; for I call it bringing up against a stone wall when having traced germ-life upon this planet back of the time when the earth's crust had cooled sufficiently for vegetation to be possible, we find ourselves confronted by the problem, Whence came the first germ? We kill germs to-day at a temperature of 212 Fahrenheit; were they less mortal in that age of fervent heat? Clearly the theistic conception of a Being rich with resources which we cannot fathom, is an immense help to the mind when it has got back as far as this. The unintelligent "forces" having failed us it is with great joy that we see the conscious Maker "perfect in knowledge" coming to our rescue. But what has all this to do with the genesis of love? A great deal to do with it, as we shall see.

In the abused name of evolutionary ethics a deliberate effort is making to account for the existence of human love by tracing it to an or-

igin no higher than the gregarious instincts of the brutes. The degrading influence exerted by such a notion upon the great central institute of human society known as marriage is obvious. If marriage, the symbol and sacrament of love, has really no higher and holier sanction than such a philosophy would intimate, we need not be in the least degree surprised at seeing it sink first to the level of a terminable contract and then below that plane. Christian theology sweeps all this animalism away by a bold stroke, namely, by the assertion of the eternal sonship of Christ. Conceding to the materialists a monopoly of the muck-rake, it soars up into the heavenly places to find where love is born.

Of the hundreds of thousands who quote approvingly St. John's memorable utterance, "God is Love," only a few so much as begin to appreciate how much the words cover and convey. To most minds, the burden of the statement is simply and only this, that the supreme Being is believed to be kindly and mercifully disposed toward his creatures, that, on the whole, He would rather bless them than curse them. But suppose we submit this surface interpretation of the language to a test, not of course with the intention of proving it false, for it is true as far as it goes, but rather for the purpose of showing it up as that worst of blind-guides, a half-truth. With this end in view, I invite you to journey

backward across time. When we have arrived at the beginnings of civilization, the years when Damascus was young and Nineveh yet unbuilt, we seem to ourselves to have traveled a long way, but let us go back farther still, let us push on into the darkness, antedate the hour when the first human breath was drawn upon the earth. Rest here for a moment, then make a fresh start into the eternity of the past. As we journey, epoch after epoch vanishes like the mile-stones seen from the window of a moving train, first the appearance of animal life upon the planet, then the appearance of vegetable life, and then the period when the primal fires have become so far cooled as to allow the shaping of continents and the hollowing out of ocean basins and river beds. This would seem a sufficiently long journey, but no, as geologists and astronomers reckon time this is only yesterday. Push on once more, let us make it our ambition to touch the very confines of time itself. Imagine the night before the day when God said "Let there be light"; blot out the whole universe of visible things at a stroke, and let us put ourselves face to face with Him whose word called it into being. Consider where we stand; everything familiar to our five senses has been swept away, man, the brutes, the rocks, the earth, the sun, the stars. And now a question,—What, in that far pre-historic, nay pre-cosmic time, was the meaning of the words,

"God is love"? That the saying must have had as real and as deep a meaning then as it has now we cannot question. St. John in this apothegm of his which I have cited is characterizing the Eternal and he names Him Love. But what does the name mean? What can it mean, now that we have supposed all trace of creative life to have been washed clean out of sight? Surely we do not meet the demands of the problem by assuming that until the appearance of the creature upon the scene God was love only in an anticipatory and prospective way; that He was looking forward through all those untold ages to the time when there would be some one human for Him to love, so that meanwhile His loving should be regarded as an actual thing. Such a conjecture must be dismissed as soon as made. Is man so estimable a being that it can have been worth his Maker's while to wait through all the eternity of the past for his appearance before He would so much as begin to love? Clearly if God from everlasting has been love, there must have been existent from everlasting some worthy recipient of love. To think of the divine love as having originated with the late coming of man upon the scene is childish. If the heavenly Father loves at all He must have loved eternally, and if He has loved eternally there must have been eternally some one for Him to love. This is where the creed of Christendom shows its im-



measurable superiority to its only serious competitor the creed of Islam. The one presents Deity to our view in a social aspect, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; the other pictures Him cut off from all communion and fellowship, the lonely tenant of a throne of ice. For even if we imagined an endless succession of created races reaching far away backward through the illimitable past, even so we should have to think of those races as all the while powerless to give back to the author of their being an adequate return. The love of the higher can satisfy the lower, but the love of the lower cannot satisfy the higher. There must be an equality of nature for love to be made perfect on both sides. It is claimed for the Moslem conception of God, which, by the way, is substantially identical with the notion held by the eighteenth century deists, that it possesses the great merit of simplicity. "Granted," say they, "that it strikes one as colorless and barren, still, only see how lucid and intelligible it is." But it is to be remembered that while we gain simplicity we may lose fulness. One would be sorry to be called upon to confess his faith in a perfectly intelligible God.

The prominent feature in the deistic definition of God is singleness, and this is unquestionably an exceedingly simple idea, and yet the very mention of it gives the death-blow to love, since it is the glory of love to prove itself unselfish

and singleness cannot be unselfish. Fatherhood is an empty name if there be no answering sonship, so that if God be really love there must have been from eternity a sonship as genuine and as actual as the fatherhood. We see at once what a tremendous sanction attaches itself to these common human relationships the moment we have thus rooted them among the eternities. The bond that unites husband to wife and child to parent is sacred for the simple reason that these things have their root and origin in the very being of God. We speak of them as natural relationships, but if God in Christ has told us the truth they are not so much natural as spiritual. They spring not out of the ground, nor are they the fruit of accident, but they are of God's fashioning, figures of the true,—shadows, indeed, yet shadows whose substance is to be sought in deity itself.

Islam degrades marriage by sanctioning polygamy, a godless statesmanship would degrade it by declaring it a civil contract and nothing more. We see the outcome of the one falsehood in the condition of woman in Asia and Africa, we see the outcome of the other in too much of the domestic life of our own land and time. A startled philanthropy cries out that human relationships are sacred and must be respected, but woe be to philanthropy if when she is asked whence the sanctity comes her only answer is

"From usage, or from expediency." High thoughts about the rights and duties of man have their origin in a true estimate of what God is like. As we believe so shall we legislate. If these domestic relations, as we call them, have only an earthly sanction then statute law may make them void, and that worst feature of slavery, the separation of families, may find under some communistic régime apologists and upholders. But if, on the other hand, these human relationships shadow forth realities inherent in the very nature of Him in whose image man was made, then they enjoy a sanction which the world neither gives nor can take away, and we may count upon them as permanent possessions.

Having thus traced the genesis of love, identified its birthplace, and cleared it from the reproach of a plebeian ancestry, I proceed to speak of the difficulties that stand in the way, or are supposed to stand in the way of our believing that God loves us. Let it be frankly acknowledged that these difficulties press heavily upon the mind of our day. Let it be confessed that never since our religion first secured a grasp upon the mind of Europe, never since what we know as the modern world began to be, has there been a time when belief in the love of God was harder to hold than now. There is a profound reason for this. So long as the religion of Christendom was practically a system of dualism

and it was possible for anybody who chose to do so, to put off upon the Devil whatever in the universe was of a distasteful or abhorrent character just so long it was comparatively easy to believe in the love of God. An incendiary fire may put the members of a household to great inconvenience, but it does not distress them as it would do if one of their own number were under suspicion of having set it. "It is some outsider, who has a grudge against us," they say to one another, "not one of the family," and they are relieved by saying so. If it were still possible, as once it seemed to be, to put off the thorns and thistles of the world upon the great enemy of man and to credit the all-Father only with the flowering shrubs and the wholesome bread-stuffs, then indeed we might think of the loving kindness of the Almighty as shining only the more conspicuously for having the adversary's work serve it as a foil. The early martyrs of the Christian faith were unquestionably much helped to suffer as they did by their naïve philosophy of Nature. The lions and the flames were Satan's work as they believed, but their trust leaned on a stronger arm than his, and their eyes were looking to the hill of God from whence presently their help would come. But we moderns, taught, be it not for a moment forgotten, by certain hints let drop by Jesus Christ Himself, have come to take a widely different view of the

matter. We see, we cannot fail to see, that the universe, the material universe I mean, is the product of one mind, that all its operations are controlled by a self-consistent force, that the same imagination conceived, and the same creative design shaped the lily and the thistle, the tassel that beautifies and the mildew that spoils corn, the serpent and the bird he charms, the seagull and the fish on which she feeds, the tiger and his prey.

It is easy to see with half an eye how much harder all this new knowledge of which we are so proud, and so justly proud, has made old-fashioned faith in the loving-kindness of God. The house seems to have been set on fire from within, the explosive seems to have been laid by the very Father of the family Himself. And yet our need of faith in the love of God is just as insistent as ever. The soul of man is as hungry and as thirsty as it was five thousand years ago. All this revolutionizing of our notions has not by a hair's breadth deflected the movement of our affections. As of old, so now our psalm of life has for its refrain those searching words "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." We are more knowing than we were in certain directions, but not less eager to be loved. The human heart is not a quagmire that it should be filled up by dumping into it great lumps of information as builders stop quicksands with rock. No,

only love can meet and satisfy the soul's craving for love, and no adding of volume after volume to the encyclopedia will ever obviate the need we stand in of a Gospel, a commendation to us of God's pity. It ought to be as easy to believe in the love of God as in his ingenuity and skill and strength, for after all, the God we worship is only the most perfect being we can possibly imagine, and we cannot think of any one as perfect without a heart, without the capacity, that is to say, for love and tenderness and compassion. The men in whom these affectional qualities exist in a starved and stunted form are not the men who command our entire respect. They may have very wonderful gifts of pure intellect, they may be admirable reasoners, masterly mathematicians, shrewd critics, but unless the heart is in the right place, as the homely phrase has it, we refuse to accept their type of manhood as a complete thing. They fill certain sorts of positions well enough, they are useful after a fashion, but it is not in them to become leaders of men. The best recognition they can expect is the sort of recognition given to specialists, for no character can be considered rounded out unless the heart traits have their due place and play. But the thought of fulness, completeness, enters necessarily into every conception we form of God. If this perfect Being whom we propose to worship lacks a whole group of qualities which we count

essential to the equipment of a satisfactory man, he is perfect no longer. In place of fulness we have deficiency. What does it matter that he has revealed himself in the solar system as a wonderful mathematician if in the social system we fail to find any evidence that he knows how to love? Man knows something, ever so little perhaps, but still something of the meaning of such words as pity, sympathy, tenderness, unselfishness, is it conceivable that God knows nothing about them, that in this field of being man is his superior? On the contrary, is it not far more reasonable to suppose that God is as much stronger than man in heart power as He evidently is in mind power? that He can love as much more as He can know more. Nobody, be he the best scholar in the world, pretends that he has penetrated very far into the domain of possible knowledge; why ought we not to feel a like modesty with respect to our acquaintance with the world of feeling? Nay, more than this, just as the best brain is baffled in the endeavor to understand and appreciate some features of the geometry by which the worlds were fashioned, must not the warmest heart that exists among all the children of men find itself incapable of entering into some phases of an absolutely perfect love? It is possible that the solution of the mystery of pain lies somewhere in this direction. To that I shall presently return. The point

I am insisting on, for the moment, is this, that since our conception of the nature of God ought to include at least as much as is found in the best furnished human being, it is only reasonable to credit that blessed One with the power, the ability to love, since lacking this He would be not only not superhuman but sub-human, something less than man.

But what has frightened our generation has been the startling discovery that so far as this world, I mean this planet is concerned, the tiger qualities appear to be in the ascendant and that the dove-like and lamb-like traits are in the comparison as nothing. This, as I was just saying, was all very well so long as it was possible to set all the unpleasant items down to Satan's discredit, but it has become a serious menace to our peace of mind now that the earth's mechanism is plainly seen to bear, all of it, the signature of one designer. How the thing may look in other worlds than this one we cannot say, for although we are becoming wonderfully well acquainted with the chemical constitution of such of them as emit or reflect light, of the conditions of life upon those that are capable of harboring life, we are profoundly ignorant. How it may be elsewhere we cannot tell, but here where we are, it is not easy, nay it is singularly difficult, nay, as some will have it, it is impossible so to shift about the letters of the words "Nature" and



"natural" as to make them spell "love of God." There would seem to be no such anagram.

Pause now, for a moment, and consider the strange and mournful conclusion to which we appear to be shut up. It is this,—that our souls instinctively crave, and our reason imperatively demands, a God who shall be just as evidently our superior in the heart traits as in the head traits, just as adorable for his transcendent power of loving as for his transcendent power of knowing, while yet, as a simple matter of fact, we fail to find in the world natural, after having ransacked it from one end to the other, any, I do not say complete proof, but any even plausible suggestion that the power which made the universe and keeps its myriad wheels in motion knows how to pity, is capable of sympathy, in a word has any heart.

But where natural history fails us, as most indisputably it does, human history comes in to our relief, and with great might succors us, for right in the midst of human history we discern high and lifted up, a Cross, and hanging on it One who says He has a message, a message which every living creature the world over is concerned to hear, and this is the message that in spite of all appearances to the contrary it is the fact that God does love man. We may say, Why did not the message come sooner? We may ask, Why is it suffered to be so long in spreading now that

it has come? We may complain that it has not been written out in the form of an inscription on the sky, so that all may read it. Yes, there are a thousand difficulties we may start if we choose, but the real question is, Can that voice from the Cross be trusted? Is the report which it brings us a true report? I do not so much want to know in what other way the Father in Heaven might have conveyed the assurance of his compassion, might have persuaded me of his willingness to forgive,—Has he done it this way? that is the all-important question, that I am dying to hear answered. But you object, and perhaps reasonably, that this is not going to the bottom of the matter. You will be willing, you say, to consider the significance of the sufferings of Christ if some good reason can first be alleged why any man should suffer. Until this has been done, you urge, the crucifixion of Christ, only adds one more to the immense accumulation of cruelty and anguish already waiting to be explained. Your questions, as I understand it, are these,—Why should such a thing as pain have any place among the possibilities of a world which its Maker professes to love? Why should fractures and dislocations and sicknesses and diseases be permitted by even a well-meaning, not to say a perfectly benevolent Creator, to entail upon the people of the earth this large heritage of anguish?

I do not for a moment pretend to have a perfectly satisfactory answer for these questions. The existence of pain is confessedly a mystery and by a mystery we understand a truth that can be only dimly and imperfectly described. Of propositions that can be made as plain as daylight we are accustomed to say that there is no mystery about them. At certain earlier stages of its growth the human mind is apt to be exceedingly intolerant of mystery. It will have nothing to do with any teachers or teaching in whom or in which it fancies that it detects this taint. "Give us only what is plainly demonstrable," is the cry; "with dimensions other than those unanswerable by the foot-rule and the square, man is not concerned." This, I say, is a phase of mental development with which we have to reckon and for which it is wise to make allowance. Perhaps one reason why men of large intellectual reach are often so fond as they are of little children, is because little children in their simple philosophy allow so much room to mystery. Habituated to receiving on faith many things which he scarcely begins to understand, the little child has really much more in common with the master than with the smatterer, for while the smatterer discourses with confidence upon all things from the cedar to the hyssop, the master has made the discovery that to the range of his best instruments there is a limit beyond which

lies darkness, and that his last analysis is called so only by courtesy.

So then with respect to this question of pain, what it is and why it is,—we shall do well, I fancy, to distrust as either sciolist or charlatan anybody whomsoever who comes to us with a pocket theory of the whole matter, ready and desirous to convince us that there is really no cloud at all upon the object glass if we will only look at it through his eye piece.

Two contrasted ways of thinking with respect to pain, invite attention.

First, there is what may be called the optimistic view of pain which in its wildest and most extravagant form goes the length of denying that there is any such thing. If we will only think hard enough we are assured, the hallucination known as pain will pass out of the horizon of our consciousness. That there is a certain modicum of truth even in this wild hypothesis, it is safe enough to acknowledge. It is said that in the excitement of battle men sometimes receive wounds without knowing it, or at any rate with a very imperfect apprehension of what has happened, and in reading the story of the early martyrs it is difficult not to account for the calmness and even exaltation which they exhibited under the torture by the conjecture that their intense faith and love exempted them, in some measure at least, from agony. But that is a

shallow science even when labelled "Christian" which bases itself upon exceptions. If there be no such thing as pain how comes there to be such a word as "pain" in all the countless vocabularies of man? And if to this it be replied that we have the names of many fabled monsters which never really existed, the rejoinder is ready, that there never was any fabled monster with a name current among all kindreds and tongue, never any unreality accepted by the whole world as a reality. But dismissing as a mental vagary, this notion that pain has no real existence, what have to say to the other optimistic theories which aim at reconciling us to suffering by persuading us that it is not such a very bad thing after all, partly because it is so useful as a cautionary signal, and partly because it serves to heighten pleasure by contrast? Our verdict upon the gospel of these would-be comforters can be I think, none other than this, "Well-meant, but mistaken." The trouble with the danger-signal theory is that it fails wholly to account for the many instances in which the nervous system gives us no warning, rings no alarm bell, but, on the contrary, leaves us in absolute ignorance until the crash comes. It fails also to account for the equally noteworthy fact that many of the complaints and disorders of which the nerves do give some sort of warning are themselves of inconsiderable import and do in no wise threaten

the citadel of life. Moreover, if the uses of pain are wholly beneficent what are we to make of the many instances in which we discern an unmistakable connection between pain and sin? If it be urged that the pains and penalties which the dissolute have commonly to endure are meant to be reformatory, what are we to make of the fact that they so seldom have any converting power upon the conscience, and that they so frequently are most insistent at a time of life when character-transformation is least easy and when the odds seem to be so heavy against the penitent. And then again how little there is, when we come to look at it, in the notion that happiness and joy can only be measured by the depth of our acquaintance with their opposite. This doctrine is sometimes applied to virtue and vice as well as to pleasure and pain, and with what disastrous results everybody knows. The most joyous beings whom we encounter are children. We, for the most part, are vicariously joyful through their joy, and yet the children are the ones who by actual experience know least of pain. Indeed there are many children who remember no pain at all worth speaking of, and certainly they are not the least joyous of their kind. No, the optimistic view of pain as a theory based on the observed facts of nature breaks down. What helps revelation gives it is for the moment aside from our purpose. I have

been speaking of the facts as we see them in common life. Those facts unaided by any articulate voice out of the unseen do not avail to prove that pain is a thing to be glad of and thankful for.

But what about the opposite interpretation of the facts? Having rejected optimism in this connection must we accept pessimism? I suspect that we are scarcely prepared for that. When we consider man's almost immeasurable,—certainly unmeasured capacity for different kinds of bodily anguish, we can imagine what his life would be if it were really under the control of a hostile deity intent on torturing him and on nothing else. In point of fact the cases in which pain is a constant attendant are few. They exist, perhaps, but they are confessedly exceptional. The vast majority of mankind is, in the main, well and about their business. Among the houses of a city the hospitals do not count for many. It is evident that we are not under the lash of a master whose whole delight is in scourging us. The power that rules us permits pain, but is not continually engaged in the infliction of it, as on the pessimistic hypothesis he ought to be. There are states of the soul in which human life looked at from the inside, seems to resemble a torture-chamber, but these are not the soul's most wholesome states, nor do they indicate a settled conviction on man's part

that it is an evil thing to live. The very fact that melancholia is reckoned a disease is decisive upon this point. If the facts be as the pessimists represent, melancholia would be man's normal state of mind.

But what is the Christian view of the matter? —that is the question which really concerns us most. How would He who on the page of history stands forth as the typical and exemplary sufferer among all who have ever lived upon the earth, how would He have us, his followers, think about this mystery of pain? He would have us think of it, I believe, neither flippantly nor despairingly. He certainly would not have us make light of it, or try to push it into a corner and hide it behind a screen. To no one have facts ever been more sacred than they were to Jesus Christ. The presence of pain in human life is a momentous fact that can by no means be blinked. Our first duty is to recognize the solemn certainty that it is here. Being here it doubtless has a meaning and a purpose. Christ recognized it, and recognized it early as having a necessary place in the enterprise He had taken in hand, the task of saving a world. When He set his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem it was not without clear provision of the scourge, the thorns and the cross. He knew well that there entered into the cup He was to drink the ingredient of pain. Now if we are accustomed in our thoughts to



regard Jesus Christ as a mere man and nothing more, I do not see that these anticipations and forebodings of his help us very much. But the moment we discern in this sufferer one in whom the Heavenly Father is well-pleased, the moment we accept his own account of Himself as a son of God who came consciously and of set purpose into the world of ours to bless it, the fact that such a one as He must needs suffer goes a long way toward reconciling us to the sufferings to which we ourselves are liable and from which it is so natural to shrink. In other words Jesus Christ unfolds to us in dim outline a great plan formed for the human race and now in process of accomplishment. The final outcome of this plan is to be glorious beyond all account, a magnificent consummation to which neither the poets nor the prophets in their wildest flights have ever so much as begun to do justice. This of course is optimism of the very loftiest type, and on this side of his teaching Christ is optimistic, transcendently, marvelously so. And this, be it always remembered, is the characteristic of our religion. Christianity is the religion of hope; the only religion, in fact, in which hope predominates. But while Christ insists that the whole drift of things is toward blessedness, He gives us plainly to understand that before the goal is reached there is much to be endured on his part, much on ours.

In the midst of this great movement toward the perfecting of love through effort and the pain which effort costs, we moderns are living out our lives. We get confused sometimes; the many voices in the world distract us. The rival gospels are so very numerous and they make such a terrible din that we are tempted often to put our hands to our ears and give up trying to listen. But these are passing moods; the soul at her best is hopeful, and in spite of prevailing hatreds and in the face of consuming sorrows her psalm is still to this effect.

Love is and was my Lord and King,  
And will be though as yet I keep  
Within his court on earth and sleep,  
Encompassed by his faithful guard ;

And hear at times a sentinel  
Who moves about from place to place,  
And whispers to the worlds of space  
In the deep night that all is well.



